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MAKE WAY FOR THE 1911



Photo Coutresy Kimber

When it comes to firearm designs with impressive pedigrees, it is hard to top the Model 1911. Created by America's most renowned gun designer, John Moses Browning, and used by the U.S. military for the greater part of a century, the 1911's capabilities are beyond question. And while the military has officially moved on to more "modern" designs, the 1911 still soldiers on within the Special Forces communities as well as the law enforcement and civilian realms.

Why is this? How is a pistol design that is more than a century old still considered a front-line-capable weapon? It is no doubt due to the strength of the basic design combined with the numerous ways in which it has been adapted and modified over the years. Will a stock, World War I-era Government Model 1911 serve you well as a defensive pistol today? Of course. But if you are looking for variations, upgrades and enhancements, there is a world of choices awaiting you.

With the full force of not only a vibrant custom market but also large-scale manufacturers behind the design, the array of models available to today's 1911 fan is downright dizzying. Are you looking for a lightweight carry model that can be tucked under concealing garments but is ready for big-bore defense at a moment's notice? How about a mid-sized model that can pull double duty both on the range *and* in your carry holster? Want a full-sized gun tricked out for competition? How about one in a "non-traditional" chambering, such as the ever-popular 9mm, the ultra-powerful 10mm or the inexpensive .22 LR? They are all out there for you right now.

So, how do you decide which 1911 is right for you? For first-time 1911 buyers and even experienced 1911 shooters, the choices today can be overwhelming. But fear not. Examples of some of the best and brightest options available today are awaiting you within the pages of this feature-packed magazine. In-depth reviews combine with beautiful photography to make this magazine a must-read issue for the 1911 fan.

At its core, the 1911 is just about as American as apple pie. This is a gun that was designed within these shores to help defend America from all its foes. The fact that it has served that role admirably is beyond question, and now you have the opportunity to become part of this tradition of excellence by picking up your own example of this classic American design. We are sure you will not be disappointed! ***—Michael O. Humphries***

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MODEL 1911

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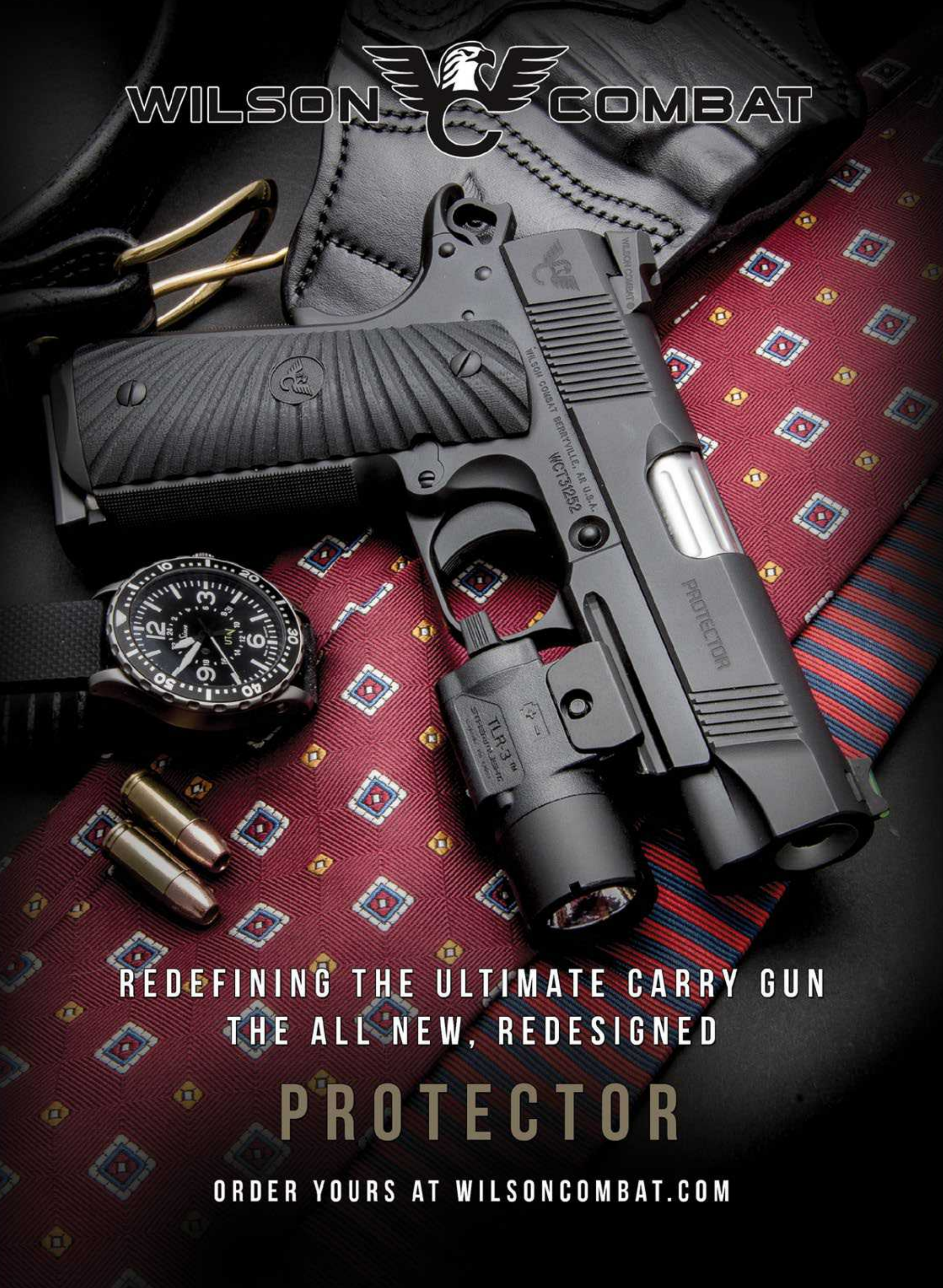
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WILSON COMBAT



REGUL

From covert carry to competition on the range, these

BILL WILSON STARTED OUT IN COMPETITION SHOOTING IN THE 1970s.

At the time, the closest such events available were Police Pistol Combat, or PPC, matches, so Wilson tried his hand at that game and found that to win you needed enhanced shooting equipment. So began his career customizing guns supplied to him by customers and making custom parts for those guns.

Later, Wilson brought out his own line of firearms, which today include 1911 pistols, a new Beretta 92/96 line, Wilson Combat AR rifles and carbines, along with shotguns under the aegis of Scattergun Technologies. Recently, I was at Bill Wilson's 8,700-acre Circle WC Ranch in East Texas pursuing wild hogs with a couple of other writers. When we weren't hunting, socializing or eating, we were at Wilson's range shooting his guns and endangering his ammunition supply. I did quite a lot of IDPA-style shooting with several of the company's impressive 1911 models, and as there are five categories of 1911 pistols and 36 variations, let's take a look at some representative examples of each category.

SUPERGRADE

The name of the Supergrade series says it all, and the top of the line is aptly named the Pinnacle. This .45



The engraved .45 ACP Pinnacle is completely detailed inside and out with several features specially selected by Bill Wilson.

ATORS

1911s are BUILT TO WIN!

BY **WILLIAM BELL** • PHOTOS COURTESY **WILSON COMBAT**

ACP 1911 exhibits the highest level of Wilson Combat craftsmanship, and it's hand-fitted and finished by a Supergrade pistolsmith. It's then embellished with classic scroll-pattern engraving and given a rich Armor-Tuff finish. Smooth burl walnut grips with gold Wilson medallions further enhance the handsome 1911. And to prove its beauty is not just skin deep, this gun is also a performer. A partial list of its features include a low-mount, adjustable rear sight; a gold bead front sight; a 5-inch, stainless, match-grade barrel with a flush-cut and reversed crown and match-grade bushing; a full-length, spiral-fluted guide rod; a high-ride Bullet Proof beavertail grip safety; a Tactical Bullet Proof thumb safety; a stainless, ultra-light hammer; an ultra-light, medium-length trigger with a crisp 3.5- to 3.75-pound pull; 30-lines-per-inch checkering on the frontstrap; a flat mainspring housing; and a one-piece Bullet Proof magazine well. This limited-edition package includes a letter of authenticity and a deluxe presentation walnut case.

The Tactical Supergrade Professional is available in .45 ACP, .38 Super and 9mm with a 4-inch, match-grade barrel. It has a compact slide hand-fitted to a full-sized frame and is outfitted with several of Wilson's tanktough Bullet Proof parts to make it the ultimate carry pistol. It shares a number of deluxe features with the Pinnacle, but its unique features include an ambidextrous Bullet Proof

thumb safety, a Bullet Proof magazine release, a rear Battlesight and tritium front sight, a full-length guide rod with a reverse plug and G10 Starburst grip panels. Some options include fiber-optic front sights; low-mount, adjustable rear sights; flush-cut and reverse-crown barrels; and countersunk slide stops.

FULL-SIZE SECURITY

As the name implies, these are regular-sized 1911 pistols like John M. Browning first conceived. You can get them in all the usual calibers, plus .40 S&W. Where else should we begin, but with the Classic. Common characteristics include the 5-inch, match-grade stainless barrel, an overall length of 8.7 inches, a height of 5.6 inches and an empty weight of 38 ounces. It's a marriage of features that make it the optimal match or carry pistol. A low-mount, adjustable sight comes standard, and serrated, gold bead, fiber-optic and tritium front sights are available.

The carbon-steel Classic can be had with a black or dual-tone finish. The slide has front and rear serrations. This pistol has several of the aforementioned features, like checkering on the grip frame, a Bullet Proof thumb safety, a contoured magazine well and double-diamond cocobolo grips. Options and upgrades for the Classic are much the same as on the Supergrades, plus you can opt for the Speed Chute magazine well.

Next is CQB Tactical LE. This 1911 is designed from the ground up for SWAT entry teams, military opera-

SPECIFICATIONS



WILSON COMBAT PINNACLE

CALIBER: .45 ACP • **BARREL:** 5 inches
OA LENGTH: 8.7 inches • **WEIGHT:** 36.6 ounces
GRIPS: Burl wood • **SIGHTS:** Bead front, Battlesight rear
ACTION: SA • **FINISH:** Deluxe Blue • **CAPACITY:** 8+1 • **MSRP:** $7,995



WILSON COMBAT CQB TACTICAL LE

CALIBER: .45 ACP, 10mm, .40, .38 Super, 9mm
BARREL: 5 inches • **OA LENGTH:** 8.7 inches • **WEIGHT:** 40.4 ounces
GRIPS: G10 Starburst • **SIGHTS:** Bead front, Battlesight rear
ACTION: SA • **FINISH:** Armor-Tuff • **CAPACITY:** 8+1 (.45) • **MSRP:** $3,115



WILSON COMBAT TACTICAL SUPERGRADE PROFESSIONAL

CALIBER: .45 ACP, 9mm, .38 Super • **BARREL:** 4 inches
OA LENGTH: 7.6 inches • **WEIGHT:** 39.2 ounces
GRIPS: G10 Starburst • **SIGHTS:** Bead front, Battlesight rear
ACTION: SA • **FINISH:** Armor-Tuff • **CAPACITY:** 8+1 • **MSRP:** $5,045



WILSON COMBAT ULTRALIGHT CARRY

CALIBER: .45 ACP, 38 Super, 9mm • **BARREL:** 5 inches
OA LENGTH: 8.7 inches • **WEIGHT:** 40.5 ounces
GRIPS: G10 Starburst • **SIGHTS:** Bead front, Battlesight rear
ACTION: SA • **FINISH:** Armor-Tuff • **CAPACITY:** 8+1 (.45) • **MSRP:** $3,650



WILSON COMBAT CLASSIC

CALIBER: .45 ACP, 10mm, .40, .38 Super, 9mm
BARREL: 5 inches • **OA LENGTH:** 8.7 inches • **WEIGHT:** 38 ounces
GRIPS: Cocobolo • **SIGHTS:** Front blade, Battlesight rear
ACTION: SA • **FINISH:** Armor-Tuff • **CAPACITY:** 8+1 (.45) • **MSRP:** $3,030



WILSON COMBAT TACTICAL CARRY

CALIBER: .45 ACP, .38 Super, 9mm • **BARREL:** 5 inches
OA LENGTH: 8.7 inches • **WEIGHT:** 37.8 ounces
GRIPS: G10 Starburst • **SIGHTS:** Tritium front, Battlesight rear
ACTION: SA • **FINISH:** Armor-Tuff • **CAPACITY:** 8+1 (.45) • **MSRP:** $3,750

tors and other LE specialists. You can get it in all the usual calibers. It has an accessory rail integral to the dust cover, a conical barrel with no bushing required and a Speed Chute magazine well. It's constructed from carbon steel with a black Armor-Tuff finish, has flat-bottomed G10 grips and is fitted with the Battlesight rear sight and a fiber-optic front sight. The CQB Tactical LE has the usual checkering on the frame, Bullet Proof custom parts, including an ambidextrous safety, and the usual options and

"No matter what you are looking for in a 1911-type pistol... you can find what you need in the vast selection of pistols offered by Wilson Combat."

upgrades, which include no forward serrations on the slide if desired.

The Ultralight Carry can be had in .45 ACP, .38 Super and 9mm, and it has a fully machined aluminum frame, making it the ultimate full-sized carry pistol. All of the pistol's edges are rounded, plus it features a round-butt-style mainspring housing and concealed-carry beavertail grip safety. A countersunk slide stop post is standard for those who want to use a laser grip. This pistol weighs a good 8 ounces less than a comparable



WILSON COMBAT PROFESSIONAL

CALIBER: .45 ACP, 9mm, .38 Super • **BARREL:** 4 inches
OA LENGTH: 7.6 inches • **WEIGHT:** 36.4 ounces
GRIPS: G10 Starburst • **SIGHTS:** Front blade, Battlesight rear
ACTION: SA • **FINISH:** Armor-Tuff • **CAPACITY:** 8+1 (.45) • **MSRP:** $2,920



WILSON COMBAT BILL WILSON CARRY

CALIBER: .45 ACP • **BARREL:** 4 inches
OA LENGTH: 7.6 inches • **WEIGHT:** 35 ounces
GRIPS: G10 Starburst • **SIGHTS:** Front blade, Battlesight rear
ACTION: SA • **FINISH:** Armor-Tuff • **CAPACITY:** 7+1 • **MSRP:** $3,205



WILSON COMBAT PROTECTOR

CALIBER: .45 ACP, 9mm
BARREL: 4 inches • **OA LENGTH:** 7.6 inches • **WEIGHT:** 38 ounces
GRIPS: G10 Starburst • **SIGHTS:** Front blade, Battlesight rear
ACTION: SA • **FINISH:** Armor-Tuff • **CAPACITY:** 8+1 (.45) • **MSRP:** $3,205



WILSON COMBAT STEALTH

CALIBER: .45 ACP, 9mm, .38 Super
BARREL: 4.1 inches • **OA LENGTH:** 7.7 inches
WEIGHT: 35.6 ounces • **GRIPS:** Wood • **SIGHTS:** Front blade, Battlesight rear
ACTION: SA • **FINISH:** Armor-Tuff • **CAPACITY:** 7+1 (.45) • **MSRP:** $3,535



WILSON COMBAT ULTRALIGHT CARRY SENTINEL

CALIBER: 9mm • **BARREL:** 3.6 inches
OA LENGTH: 7.2 inches • **WEIGHT:** 25.2 ounces
GRIPS: G10 Starburst • **SIGHTS:** Front blade, Battlesight rear
ACTION: SA • **FINISH:** Armor-Tuff • **CAPACITY:** 8+1 • **MSRP:** $3,875



WILSON COMBAT X-TAC COMPACT

CALIBER: .45 ACP, 9mm • **BARREL:** 4 inches
OA LENGTH: 7.6 inches • **WEIGHT:** 33.8 ounces
GRIPS: G10 Starburst • **SIGHTS:** Front blade, Battlesight rear • **ACTION:** SA
FINISH: Armor-Tuff • **CAPACITY:** 7+1 (.45), 8+1 (9mm) • **MSRP:** $2,785

WILSON COMBAT REGULATORS



Bill Wilson (above) learned what 1911s needed to win in matches, then began customizing competitors' pistols before starting Wilson Combat and offering high-quality 1911s like the CQB (shown), which is available in .45 ACP, 9mm, .40, 10mm and .38 Super.

steel-framed 1911. You get many of the usual features seen on Wilson Combat 1911s, including an Armor-Tuff finish and G10 Starburst grips.

The Tactical Carry is the newest offering in the Full-Size line. It has a steel frame fitted with the round-butt, one-piece mag well for fast reloading. The heavier frame also tames recoil while reducing wear during high-volume shooting sessions. This pistol has many of the most popular cosmetic and performance options seen on other Wilson Combat 1911 models, plus a serrated slide, Bullet Proof and Concealment Proof options, G10 Starburst grips, a 5-inch, stainless, match-grade barrel with a fluted chamber, a Battlesight rear sight and a fiber-optic front sight.

PROFESSIONAL PROTECTION

One of the distinctions in the Professional category of 1911 pistols are the 4-inch, match-grade stainless steel barrels that come standard on the series. This, of course, means the slide is also about an inch shorter than the full-sized models, and the height is also reduced by 0.2 inches on these guns. The model that begins this series is none other than the Professional model.

The design of this 1911 actually came about due to customer requests, and it has been a customer favorite since its introduction. One of the hallmarks of this handgun is a full-sized grip frame mated to a compact barrel/slide assembly. This will feel better in your hand if you're used to the heft of a full-sized 1911, and the compact slide, with its 4-inch, match-grade barrel, will get on target



Stryker Commander Recon



Republic Government



Patriot Commander

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faster and easier. The pistol has Bullet Proof controls, a Battlesight rear sight and a fiber-optic front sight, G10 Starburst grips, a checkered front- and backstrap and a contoured magazine well. All the most popular options and upgrades are available.

The Professional Protector has a stainless steel barrel with an integral accessory rail, along with Wilson Combat's round-butt configuration. It comes in .45 ACP, .38 Super and 9mm, has G10 Starburst grips with black WC medallions, a Battlesight rear sight, a fiber-optic front sight and a Bullet Proof round-butt magazine well. The Professional Protector has a number of other Bullet Proof parts, like the grip, thumb safety and magazine release. Other features include a countersunk slide stop, a heavy machine chamfer on the bottom of the slide, carry cuts, and the 4-inch, match-grade barrel has Wilson's flush-cut reverse crown as well as a fluted chamber.

COMPACT CARRY

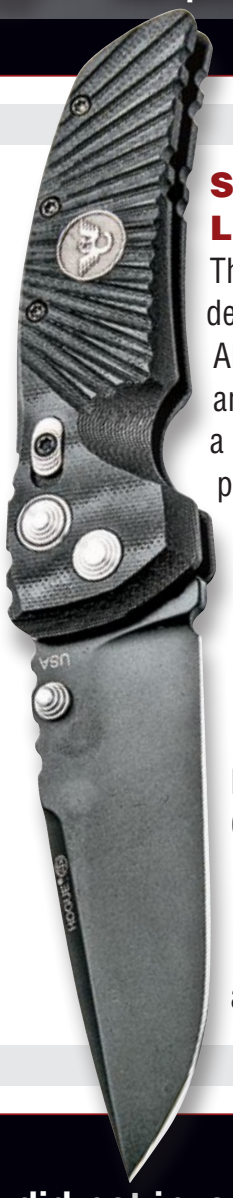
The exact clone of what rides on Bill Wilson's hip every day is aptly named the Bill Wilson Carry Pistol. As expected, this is a high-end 1911 based on the CQB Compact frame with some custom enhancements. It comes in all steel with a blued finish, a Battlesight rear sight, a bushing-

WILSON COMBAT EDGE

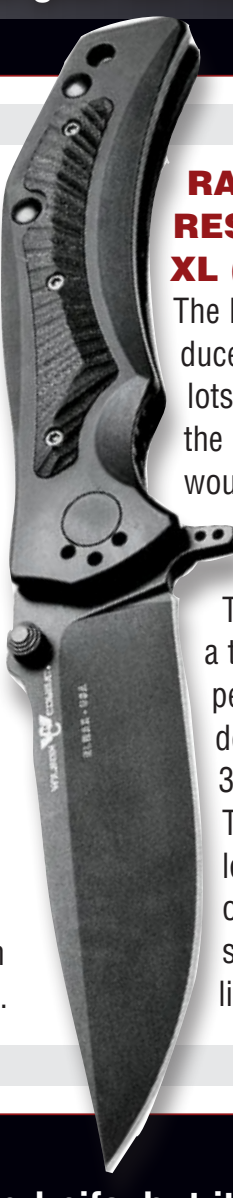
Wilson Combat did not invent the 1911 pistol, it just made it better. The same attention to detail that goes into each Wilson 1911—making them attractive, reliable and accurate performers—also goes into Wilson Combat's folding knives.



TALON: The Talon is a frame-lock folder that weighs 6 ounces, has a cutting edge that measures 3.625 inches and is made of CTS-XHP stainless steel. The handle is made of titanium with a "starburst" pattern similar the Wilson's 1911 grips panels. The design is from knife-maker Les George.



STAR-LIGHT: This folder was designed by Allen Elishewitz and is built with a 3.5-inch, drop-point blade. Weighing 4 ounces, this is a do-all, carry-anywhere sort of knife. The black G10 grip handle has a G-Mascus pattern that offers plenty of texture for a sure grip in any environment.



RAPID RESPONSE XL (RRX): The RRX is produced in small lots to ensure the quality one would expect from Wilson Combat. The RRX has a trigger flipper to quickly deploy its 3.5-inch blade. The frame lock is made of titanium for strength and light weight.

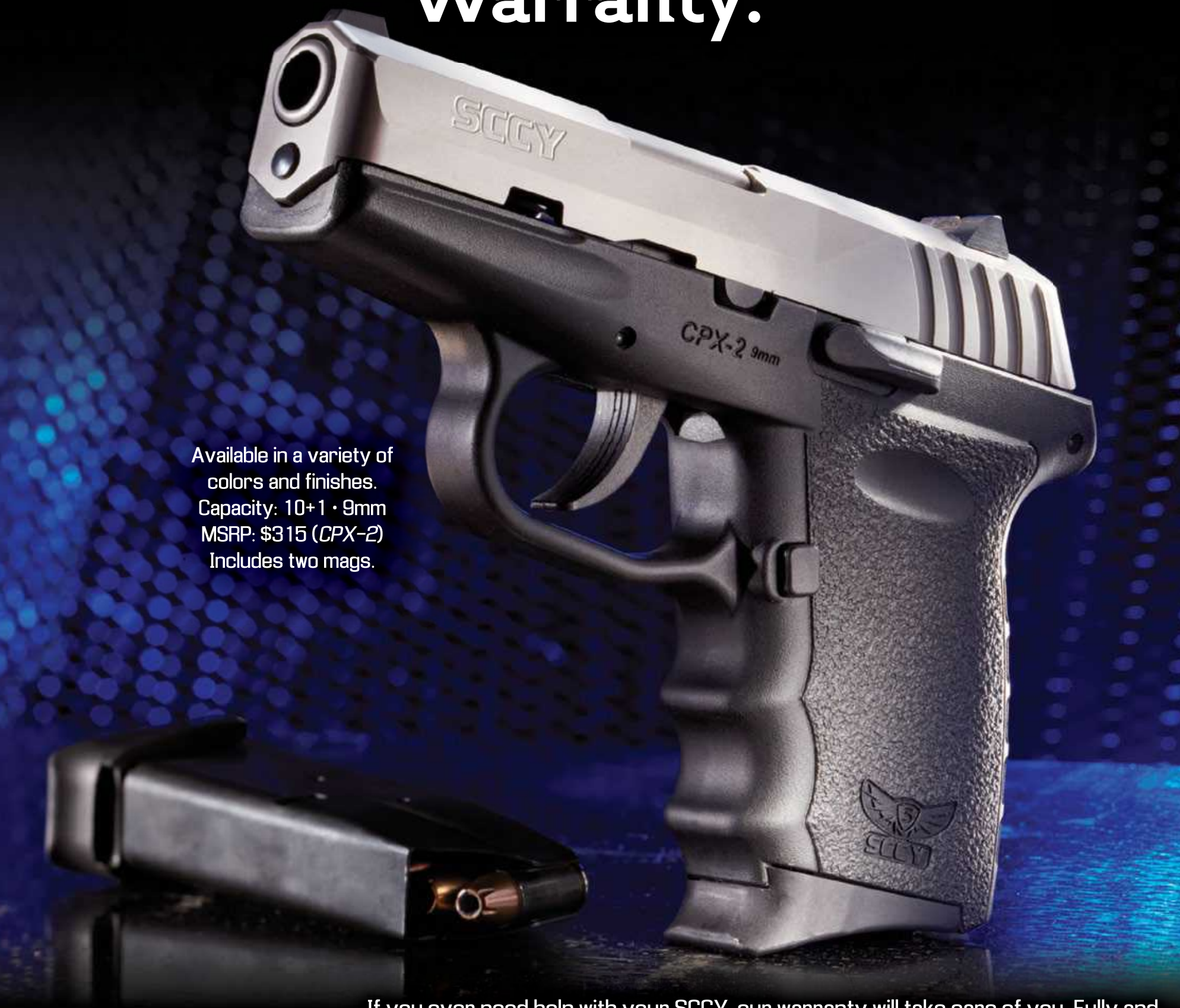


EXTREME LIGHT CARRY (ELC) ELITE: This folding knife features a 3.5-inch, drop-point blade made of high-strength, ELMAX-powdered, stainless steel—one of the best blade materials available.

Wilson Combat did not invent the folding knife, but it sure did improve upon the design and performance. (wilsoncombat.com; 800-955-4856) ***—Robert Sadowski***

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Like other Wilsons, the CQB Compact features G10 Starburst grips and a durable Armor-Tuff finish.

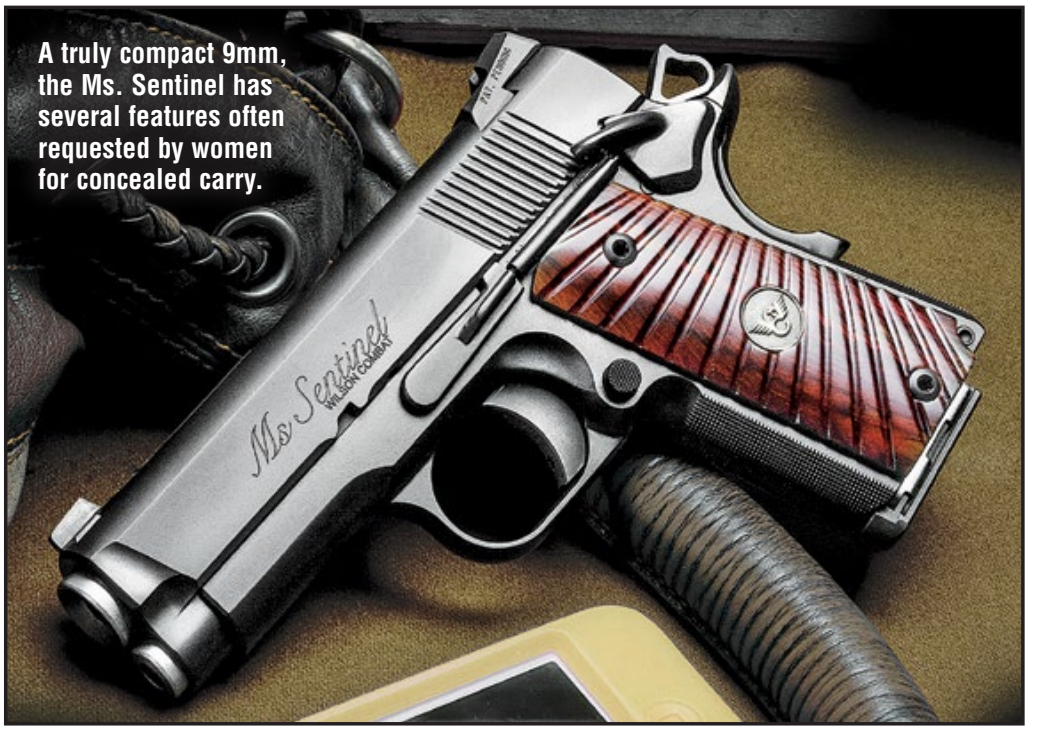
less, 4-inch, match-grade barrel, a target trigger and an Ultra-Light hammer. The top of the slide is serrated to reduce glare, the frame has been given the round-butt configuration, and the slide has been narrowed in the front. The slide stop post has been recessed and the hole is chamfered to make it easier to use Crimson Trace Lasergrips. As this is a special pistol, it's only available in .45 ACP.

With its good looks, the Stealth has dibs as the classiest compact Wilson 1911. In fact, it is slightly smaller than other compact models, but with a 4.1-inch, hand-fit, heavy flanged, match-grade, conical barrel. The steel frame is shortened by 0.5 inches and the slide by an inch so you get an advantage of fast target acquisition combined with excellent concealment characteristics. Standard equipment includes Battle Proof controls, a Battlesight rear sight, a fiber-optic front sight, a one-piece guide rod, a contoured magazine well, G10 Starburst grips and a matte black Armor-Tuff finish.

One of the more truly unique Wilson 1911 models is the X-TAC Compact. This 4-inch-barreled model comes in .45 ACP or 9mm and has enhanced textured (X-shaped) cuts at the rear of the slide in place of the usual serrations; they're also on the frontstrap and round-butt mainspring housing. These bi-directional cuts have been found to work well in wet and hard-use environments, offering security and gun-handling comfort. It also carries the newest U-notch Battlesight rear sight, which makes it optimal for low-light conditions when mated with the fiber-optic front sight. This all-steel package is finished in a durable Armor-Tuff finish, making it the professional's working handgun. It also comes with Bullet Proof grip and thumb safety, a contoured mag well and G10 Starburst grips.

SENTINEL DEFENSE

There are just four of the Sentinel subcompact models with 3.6-inch barrels, but my pick is the Ultralight Carry Sentinel. This lightweight concealment piece comes only in 9mm, and it is Wilson Combat's smallest, lightest creation. It's optimized to work best with high-performance 9mm loads so that it shoots as good as it looks. Its stainless, match-grade, conical barrel is hand-fitted and comes with a fluted chamber. It has the Battlesight rear sight and a fiber-optic front sight, and the top of the slide has 30-lpi serrations. Its concealability is enhanced with the round-butt mainspring housing, a Bullet Proof grip safety and Tactical thumb safety, a shortened/rounded magazine release, a countersunk slide stop and a heavy chamfer on the bottom of the slide. No matter what you are looking for in a 1911-type pistol, I'll bet you can find what you need in the vast selection of pistols offered by Wilson Combat. For more, visit wilsoncombat.com or call 800-955-4856. **1911**



A truly compact 9mm, the Ms. Sentinel has several features often requested by women for concealed carry.

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The 1911, including Ed Brown's Special Forces .45 ACP, is one of the most easily recognized handguns in the world.

WARHORSE LEGACY

From the front lines to the firing line, the 1911 has served and protected for over 100 years!

BY **FRED MASTISON**

Many handgun designs have come and gone over the years. Several have remained in our minds as special, yet only one is considered iconic. The 1911 pistol designed by John Moses Browning holds that rare space as a reliable workhorse even 104 years after its official release.

While it's true that there is a sense of nostalgia for this heavy-metal fight stopper, there is more to it than that. The history of the 1911 begins long before the adopted, dated name. In 1898, America went to war with Spain and quickly ended up in treacherous jungle warfare against the Moro tribesmen in the Philippines. While the soldiers' Springfield rifles were effective, there was a less than enthusiastic response to the issued .38-caliber double-action (DA) revolvers. So much so that the old Colt Model 1873 revolver was brought back into service. These pistols dated back to the Plains Indian Wars.

An after-action review of the combat in the Philippines resulted in the Thompson-LaGarde test in 1904. This was a military testing event that was focused on determining which cartridge was needed for military use. They tested a wide variety of cartridges available at that time and determined that "a bullet, which will have the shock effect and stopping effect at short ranges necessary for a military pistol or revolver, should have a caliber of not less than .45."

FRONTLINE .45

In 1906, the military began evaluating several pistol designs as well as the suitability of the new .45 ACP round. Enter Colt and its submission designed by John M. Browning.



This Stan Chen Custom .45, with its mag well funnel, fluted hood and solid trigger, is just one example of a combat-ready 1911 that is also a work of art.



Volkmann Precision can help you obtain the one-of-a-kind 1911 you've always wanted.



Wilson Combat, one of the first names in 1911s, offers its Tactical Supergrade in many chamberings.



This Jardine's Custom 1911 features an ambidextrous thumb safety and adjustable sights for upgrades.

After extensive testing, the Browning pistol was officially adopted by the U.S. Army on March 29, 1911, and thus became known officially as the Model 1911. Two years later, the U.S. Navy and U.S. Marine Corps would adopt the same pistol.

The 1911 would see battle around the world and develop a reputation as a trusted friend in dangerous places. Its iconic nature was further fueled during World War I, when the story of Sergeant York stopping six German soldiers with six shots became public. The biggest testing ground, however, came during World War II, when the military put more than 3 million of the pistols into service. From the Pacific to the frozen fields of Europe, the 1911 saw action in every theater of combat. It would continue in service during the Korean War as well as Vietnam. The 1911 continued to see military use until 1985, when the 9mm round was adopted as the primary service round for pistols. But that would not be the end of the 1911.

ELITE FIREPOWER

There are currently over 100 different companies manufacturing versions of the 1911 pistol. Some are custom shops building made-to-order guns and others are full-sized manufacturers that maintain a 1911 line of pistols. The popularity of the 1911 has ebbed and flowed over the years, but there seems to be a bit of a renaissance for this pistol since 2011 and its 100-year anniversary. While some may argue that there has never been a down time for Mr. Browning's workhorse, it is undeniable that its popularity has grown.

A good example of this can be seen with Remington. In the 1910s,



The detailed gunsmiths at Cabot Guns fit their S100 series 1911s by hand for precision fit and finish. Note the star trigger and slide checkering.

“To the serious gun aficionado, the lines and build of the 1911 call to a time when function and form went together.”

the company produced countless 1911-style pistols for the government. When World War I ended, so did Remington’s production of the 1911. Now, fast-forward to April of 2010, when the company announced that it would once again be producing the 1911. Decisions such as this are not made purely on sentiment and nostalgia. The market for these pistols has grown, and Remington made the choice to get into that market.

While there are several multi-weapon manufacturers such as Remington, there exists a group of gun manufacturers that almost exclusively deal with 1911s. One of the first names on that list is Wilson Combat. Founded in 1977, Wilson Combat has built some of the finest 1911s on the market. Add to that list names like Nighthawk Custom and STI and you can quickly see that the demand for these pistols is still high. The skills required to build reliable and accurate 1911 pistols eclipses most other gun building. Fit and finish are more than catchphrases for serious custom builders. As with any piece of finely made hardware, though, there is a price. While prices run a vast spectrum, a serious custom 1911 can easily run in the $3,000 to over $5,000 range.

HIGH PERFORMANCE

The 1911 is unique in the gun world because, in many cases, it is a collector piece as well. With a variety of factors driving price, including rarity, history and condition, prices can vary. Possibly one of the most expensive 1911s ever sold belonged to Clyde Barrow and received a winning bid of over $240,000 at auction.

Some of the factors that make the 1911 a popular gun go much further than the “cool” factor. With a smooth single-action trigger and a heavier frame, the 1911 is an accurate and easy-to-shoot gun. This pistol has also been produced in many versions. From a full-sized Government Model with a 5-inch barrel to the Defender with its 3-inch barrel, there is a wide spectrum of sizes.

One of the early popular modifications, though, was to chamber the gun in .38 Super as a competition pistol. The weight of the frame, the barrel length and a good trigger made it a natural base on which to build a competition gun. We now see the 1911 chambered in 9mm, .357, .22 LR as well as other more interesting calibers. Along with being the

most used pistol by the world's best USPSA/IPSC shooters, the 1911 is also the predominant centerfire pistol format at the Camp Perry Bullseye pistol matches.

While not as prominent in law enforcement and military circles as it once was, the 1911 maintains a presence with some agencies. The Hurst, Texas, Police Department has issued the 1911 as a duty weapon since 1974. The 1911 also sees action with some military units, including the Marine Corps' MARSOC units.

Another prominent event involving the 1911 occurred in 1993 when two U.S. Delta Force operators, Master Sergeant Gary Gordon and Sergeant First Class Randall Shughart, were inserted into a helicopter crash site in Mogadishu, Somalia. Their story was later portrayed in the book *Black Hawk Down*. After Sgt. Shughart was fatally wounded, Sgt. Gordon continued to protect the helicopter's wounded pilot, eventually fighting to the death with his 1911 pistol. It is this type of valor and courage that the 1911 has personified throughout its military and LE service.

BUILT TO LAST

The truth of the matter is that the 1911 is a work of art. To the serious gun aficionado, the lines and build of the 1911 call to a time when function and form went together. A well-made 1911 is the product of true craftsmanship. The men and women who are true 1911 smiths are no less artists than any person with a paintbrush. References to the 1911 equate it to a fine car where time and attention were paid in order to create the best product.

"...the 1911 has secured itself a place in the hearts and minds of gun owners around the world."



The aptly named Blackout from Pistol Dynamics has a fluted barrel and an all-business finish.

But is a 1911 for everyone? That depends on several factors, including your experience with handguns. Undoubtedly, the 1911 is not as "easy" to run as a polymer-framed, striker-fired pistol. The grip safety and thumb safety have caused more than one issue with new shooters. Additionally, the 1911 requires more service than its polymer cousins. While some say a Glock only needs the "thought" of lubrication, a 1911 must be kept lubed. The most brutally honest words on the subject were uttered by firearms expert Larry Vickers. If you want a true measure of how well you would handle a 1911, he states that you should "Take a look at your lawn mower. Do you take care of it or is it set in a corner of your garage covered in grass and dirt?" If it is the latter, then you might rethink the 1911."

The 1911 is a mechanical marvel. The design, based on John Browning's 1889 patent, has been a fundamental blueprint or reference point for pretty much every centerfire autoloader produced in the 20th and 21st centuries. Very few mechanical designs have been copied, cloned or referenced as much as the 1911. While not currently seen as a cutting-edge or new tool, the 1911 has secured itself a place in the hearts and minds of gun owners around the world. It's a classic weapon that has found a new and ever-growing following. **1911**

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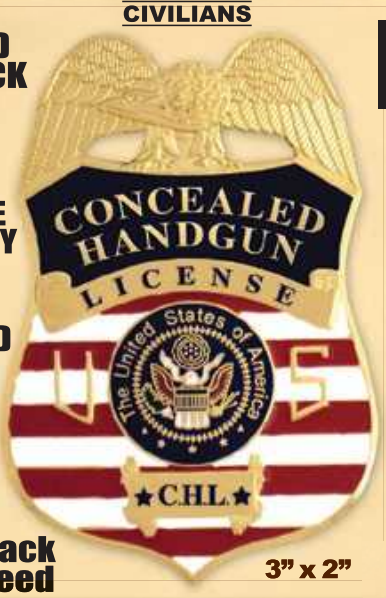
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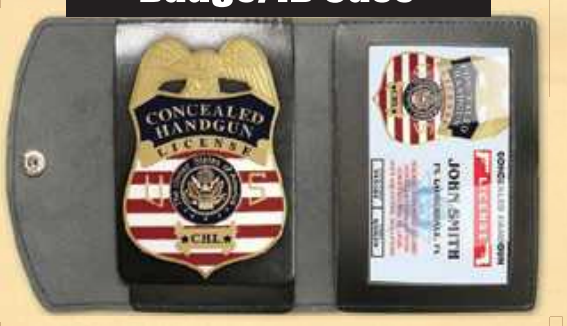
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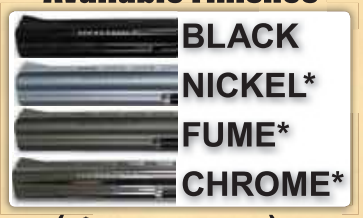


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COLT COMBAT

Classic pistol that would be a great addition for any collector or avid shooter.

BY **ROB GARRETT** • PHOTOS BY **RICHARD KING**

The popularity of the 1911 seems to have no ceiling. Over 100 years since its introduction, it is almost impossible to count the number of manufacturers that produce 1911 pistols. However, given the choice, the purist, along with a majority of enthusiasts, would choose a Colt.

During a recent conversation with my friend Bill Laughridge of Cylinder & Slide, the subject of Colt came up. Bill was a consultant to Colt for several years and understands its history and corporate culture. In the recent conversation we had, Bill said that the last several Colt 1911 pistols he had seen were exceptional and, to quote him, "are the best pistols Colt has made in years!" That recommendation led me to request a new Colt Combat Elite for this project.

When I picked up the Colt Combat Elite, it was packaged in a lockable, plastic hard case.

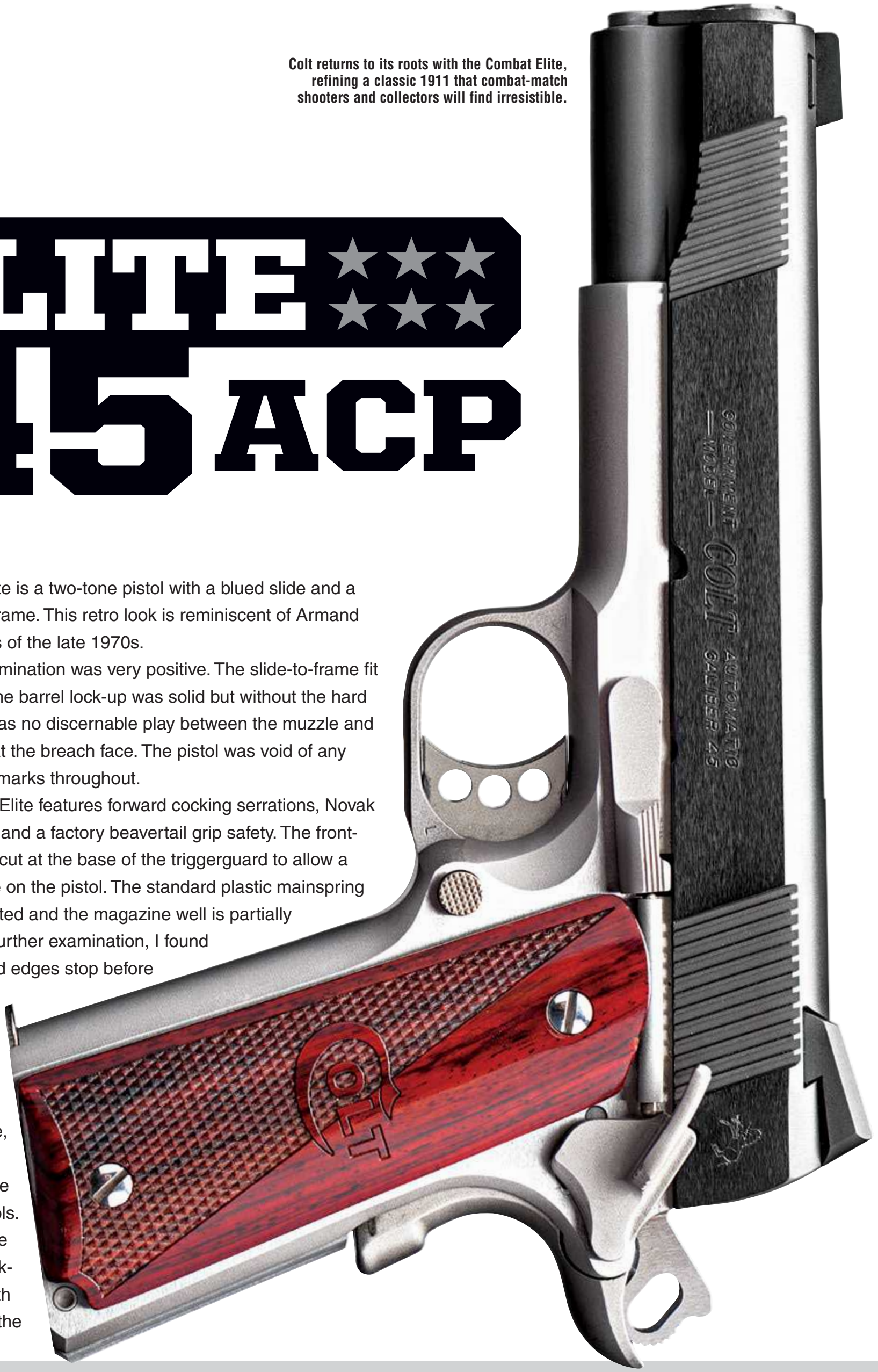
Colt returns to its roots with the Combat Elite, refining a classic 1911 that combat-match shooters and collectors will find irresistible.

ELITE .45 ACP

The Combat Elite is a two-tone pistol with a blued slide and a stainless steel frame. This retro look is reminiscent of Armand Swenson's guns of the late 1970s.

My initial examination was very positive. The slide-to-frame fit was good and the barrel lock-up was solid but without the hard "clunk." There was no discernable play between the muzzle and the bushing or at the breach face. The pistol was void of any rough machine marks throughout.

The Combat Elite features forward cocking serrations, Novak three-dot sights and a factory beavertail grip safety. The front-strap has a ball cut at the base of the triggerguard to allow a higher purchase on the pistol. The standard plastic mainspring housing is serrated and the magazine well is partially beveled. Upon further examination, I found that the radiused edges stop before the rear wall of the well. An extended thumb safety, a ring hammer and a three-hole, match-type trigger round out the operating controls. The grips feature a diagonal checkering pattern with the Colt logo in the





Checkered rosewood grips give the two-tone Combat Elite a classic look and feel.

center. Two polished stainless, eight-round magazines come standard with the Combat Elite.

RUNNING THE COLT

I was anxious to hit the range with the new Colt and see just how well it performed. The best news to report is that the Combat Elite was 100-percent reliable with a variety of loads. We ran 100+ rounds of ball ammo along with a mix of duty/self-defense loads with zero malfunctions. The three-dot Novaks presented the customary sight picture, and the Combat Elite shot point of aim (POA)/point of impact (POI) at 25 yards.

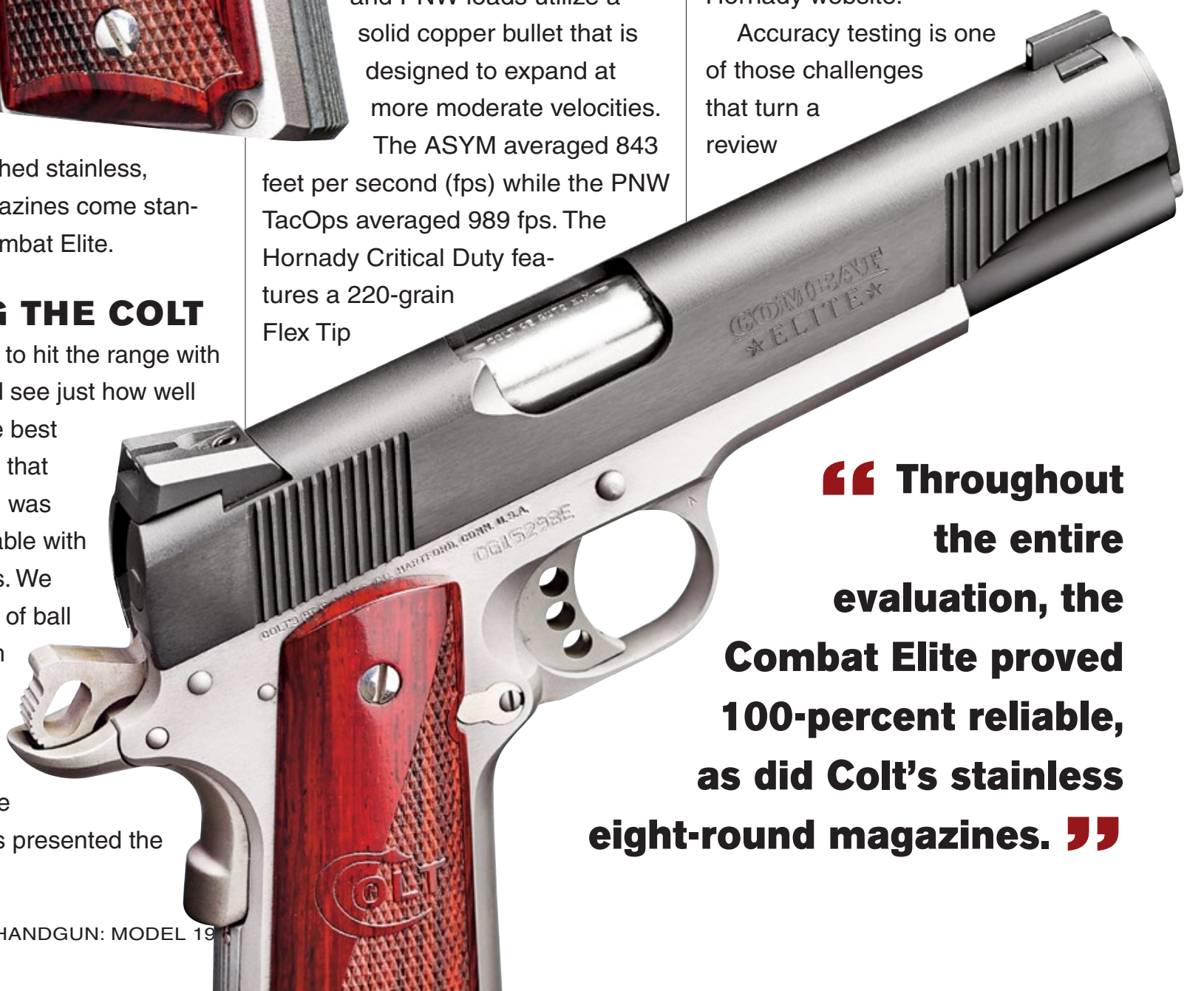
For formal testing, I selected ASYM Precision's 185-grain TSX load, PNW's TacOps 185-grain SCP and Hornady's Critical Duty 220-grain +P load. Each of these loads has a distinct bullet profile that I wanted to test in the Combat Elite. Velocity testing took place at 10 feet using a Pro Chrono from Brownells. Normally, factory 185-grain loads are loaded hotter for better performance. The ASYM and PNW loads utilize a solid copper bullet that is designed to expand at more moderate velocities. The ASYM averaged 843 feet per second (fps) while the PNW TacOps averaged 989 fps. The Hornady Critical Duty features a 220-grain Flex Tip bullet that eliminates clogging and ensures adequate penetration and expansion. Hornady describes the Critical Duty load as an "intelligent bullet that reacts differently depending on the barrier it encounters." The Critical Duty load averaged 1,015 fps from the 5-inch barrel of the Combat Elite. This was slightly faster than the 975 fps as shown on the Hornady website.

Accuracy testing is one of those challenges that turn a review

SPECIFICATIONS

COLT COMBAT ELITE

CALIBER	.45 ACP
BARREL	5 inches
OA LENGTH	8.5 inches
WEIGHT	36 ounces
GRIPS	Rosewood
SIGHTS	Novak Low Mount Carry
ACTION	SA
FINISH	Stainless
CAPACITY	8+1
MSRP	$1,099



"Throughout the entire evaluation, the Combat Elite proved 100-percent reliable, as did Colt's stainless eight-round magazines."



Note the Colt upswept beavertail grip safety with a palm swell and the single-sided Colt Tactical Safety.

into work! However, the Combat Elite made the job manageable and produced some impressive groups. I shot all three test loads off-hand from 25 yards. The results do not include called flyers. I managed to get a 2.16-inch group from the ASYM load and a 1.29-inch group from the PNW. The hotter Hornady load produced a 1.93-inch group that I was very pleased with. Throughout the entire evaluation, the Combat Elite proved 100-percent reliable, as did Colt's stainless eight-round magazines.

PERFORMANCE

COLT COMBAT ELITE .45 ACP

LOAD	VELOCITY	ACCURACY
ASYM Precision 185 TSX	857	2.16
Hornady Critical Duty 220 +P	1,032	1.93
PNW TacOps 185 SCP	1,003	1.29

Bullet weight measured in grains, velocity in fps and accuracy in inches for best five-shot groups at 25 yards.



Carrying a full-size 1911 requires some thought and the proper setup. One of my favorite concealment holsters is the Galco V-Hawk. The V-Hawk is an inside-the-waistband (IWB) holster that is constructed from nearly indestructible steer hide and precisely molded for each specific model. A reinforced mouth allows for safe and easy one-hand holstering. The belt attachments are spaced fore and aft of the holster on wings, making the V-Hawk very stable and comfortable. Available with leather belt loops or tuckable injection-molded hooks, the V-Hawk,



when combined with a solid Galco dress belt, provides maximum support for an otherwise large pistol.

PARTING SHOTS

From a personal perspective, the trailing edge of the Combat Elite's thumb safety might better serve the operator if it were beveled. And as with other current production Colts, the slide and frame of the Combat Elite sport sharp edges that I'd like to have radiused.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Colt
800-962-2658
colt.com

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Some other things I might consider include: recessing the barrel crown, adding checkering on the frontstrap, and a metal/checkered mainspring housing. However, one must remember that this is a factory production-line pistol that retails for a little under $1,100. All things considered, the Combat Elite has a lot going for it straight out of the box. First, it is a Colt from Hartford, Connecticut. Second, it has good fit and finish with very functional sights and controls. Finally, it is a very attractive finish. The matte stainless frame tends to accent the polished bluing of the slide.

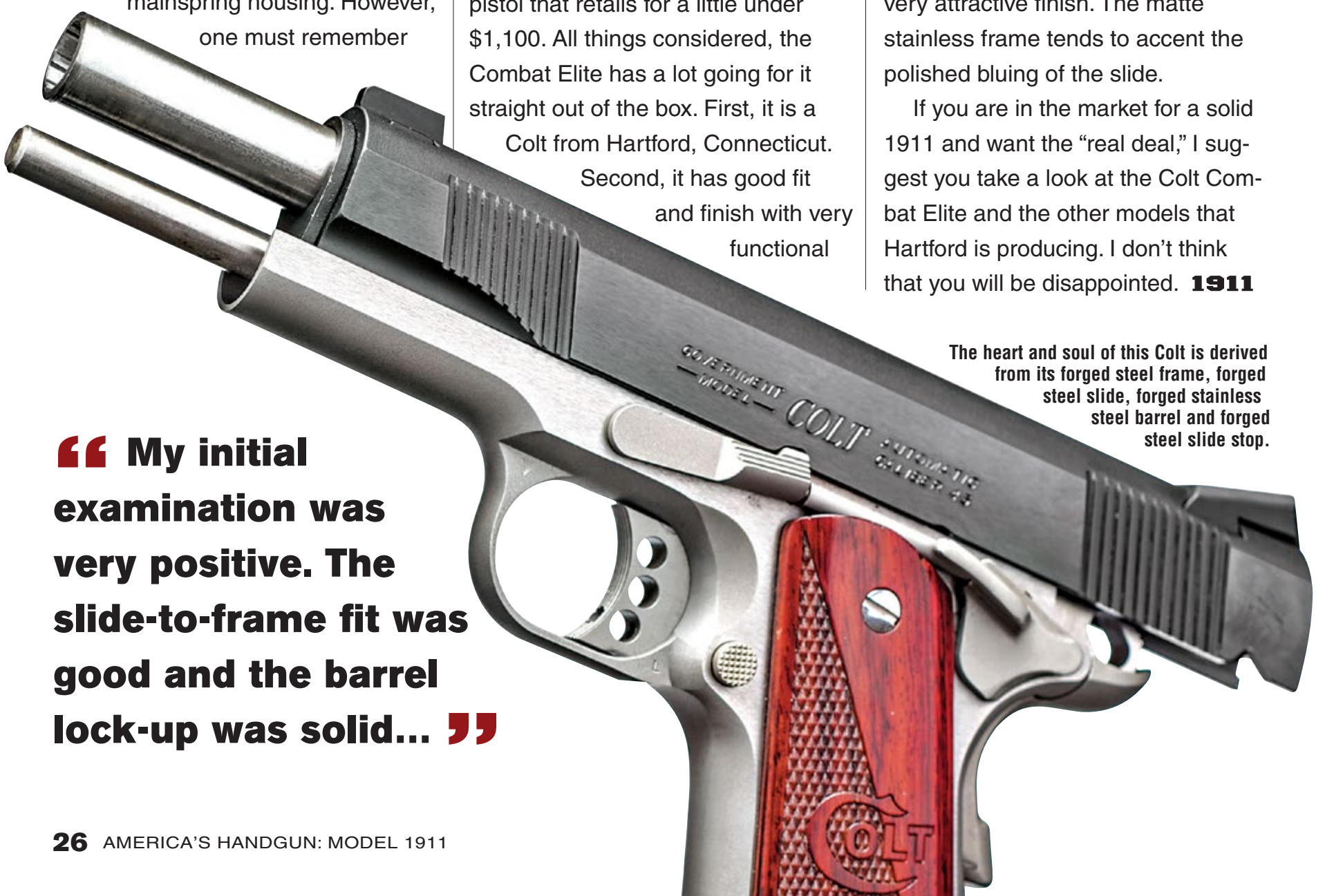
If you are in the market for a solid 1911 and want the "real deal," I suggest you take a look at the Colt Combat Elite and the other models that Hartford is producing. I don't think that you will be disappointed. **1911**



WALTHER-COLT RIMFIRES ★★★

Under exclusive license from Colt, Walther manufactures three .22 LR rimfire tactical pistols that are splitting images of three of Colt's iconic centerfire pistols. It is one thing to have a .22 LR pistol looks like a Colt 1911—that's the easy part—the 1911s Walther manufacturers function and operate just like the centerfire models. The manual thumb safety, grip safety, trigger and hammer work just like their big bore counterparts. Plus, since the dimensions of Walther's tactical rimfire are near identical to a Colt, the Walther pistol's accepts most aftermarket parts designed for a Colt like grip panels and sights. They also field strip like a Colt. All of Walther's Colt 1911s use a simple blowback operation and have 12+1 capacity.

The Colt Government 1911 A1 (MSRP: $399) features classic Colt 1911A1 with fixed sight, double diamond checkered grips and a spur hammer. This model has retro WWII look. The Colt Gold Cup (MSRP: $499) is a rimfire version of Colt's iconic target pistol featuring a fully adjustable rear sight, wrap around checkered rubber grips and a skeletonize trigger and hammer. Train all you want with these 1911 rimfires that feed off of inexpensive .22 rimfire. The Colt Rail Gun (MSRP: $449) is the full out tactical version of Colt's popular Rail gun with a Picatinny style rail, front and rear slide serrations and low-mount combat style 3-dot sights. (waltherarms.com; 479-242-8500) ***—Robert Sadowski***



The heart and soul of this Colt is derived from its forged steel frame, forged steel slide, forged stainless steel barrel and forged steel slide stop.

"My initial examination was very positive. The slide-to-frame fit was good and the barrel lock-up was solid..."

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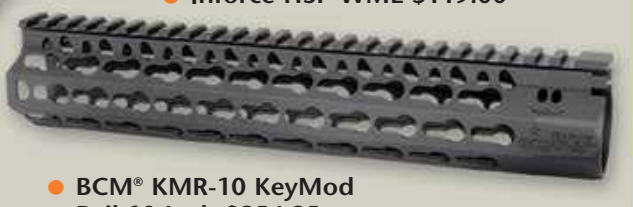


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- Midwest Industries SPLP Rear Sight $119.95



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WARHORSE GUARDIANS

Modern style meets classic function in Kimber's versatile 1911 lineup!

BY ROBERT A. SADOWSKI

Kimber is one of the largest producers of 1911s, offering a stable of pistols that not only have an aesthetic beauty but perform as good as they look. With 1911s in six different size configurations, you can get a Kimber pistol scaled to your needs and any potential scenarios you may encounter. Kimber has brought snag-free concealed-carry treatments to 1911s to a level previously unseen. The company's Carry Melt treatment means all the sharp edges are gone: There's nothing to snag when drawing from concealment.



The Micro series takes the proven 1911 design elements, like the controls, the single-action trigger and grip angle, and puts it in a true backup-sized 1911. Here is the latest breed of Kimber's 1911-style pistols. (kimberamerica.com; 888-243-4522)

ONYX ULTRA II

The Onyx Ultra II has rakish good looks in a compact 1911. The frame is made of aluminum and wears a satin silver finish. On the top side, the stainless steel slide has a deep black PVD coating with cut scroll engraving. The pistol utilizes a full-length guide rod and a fully ramped barrel. Tactical wedge night sights and thin, black Micarta grips round out this pistol's sleek good looks.

SPECIFICATIONS

CALIBER: 9mm, .45 ACP • **BARREL:** 3 inches
OA LENGTH: 6.8 inches • **WEIGHT:** 25 ounces (empty)
SIGHTS: Tactical wedge, three-dot night • **GRIPS:** Micarta
ACTION: SA • **FINISH:** Satin silver frame, engraved black slide
CAPACITY: 8+1 (9mm), 7+1 (.45 ACP) • **MSRP:** $1,652



PRO TLE II (TFS)

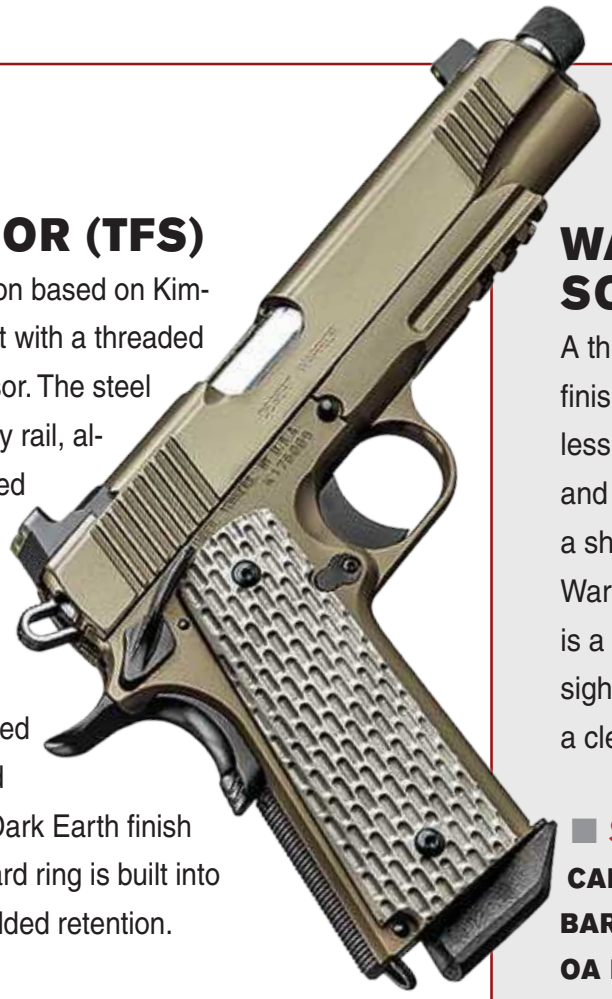
Kimber's Pro series pistols feature a full-length grip with a 4.25-inch Commander-length barrel. The Pro TLE II (TFS) is built primarily for law enforcement and military operators. The stainless steel, match-grade barrel is threaded for suppressor (TFS) use and is equipped with high, tritium, three-dot night sights for shooting with a can. Both the frame and the slide are constructed of steel and sport a no-nonsense matte black finish.

SPECIFICATIONS

CALIBER: .45 ACP • **BARREL:** 4.25 inches • **OA LENGTH:** 8.35 inches
WEIGHT: 35 ounces (empty) • **GRIPS:** Black synthetic
SIGHTS: Tritium three-dot night • **ACTION:** SA
FINISH: Matte black • **CAPACITY:** 7+1 • **MSRP:** $1,224

DESERT WARRIOR (TFS)

The Desert Warrior is based on based on Kimber's USMC (ICQB) pistol, but with a threaded barrel for use with a suppressor. The steel frame incorporates a Picatinny rail, allowing accessories to be added by the operator. Forward slide serrations and tall sights for use with a suppressor top off the steel slide. A "Service Melt" treatment is used for better operator control and manipulation. The KimPro II Dark Earth finish is self-lubricating, and a lanyard ring is built into the mainspring housing for added retention.



SPECIFICATIONS

CALIBER: .45 ACP • **BARREL:** 5.5 inches • **OA LENGTH:** 9.19 inches
WEIGHT: 40 ounces (empty) • **GRIPS:** G10 • **ACTION:** SA
SIGHTS: Tritium three-dot night • **FINISH:** KimPro II Dark Earth
CAPACITY: 7+1 • **MSRP:** $1,586

WARRIOR SOC (TFS)

A threaded barrel, a two-tone finish, tall sights and a stainless steel, match-grade barrel and matching bushing are only a short list of the features on the Warrior SOC (TFS). Also included is a Crimson Trace Rail Master laser sight. The trigger is set at the factory for a clean 4- to 5-pound break.

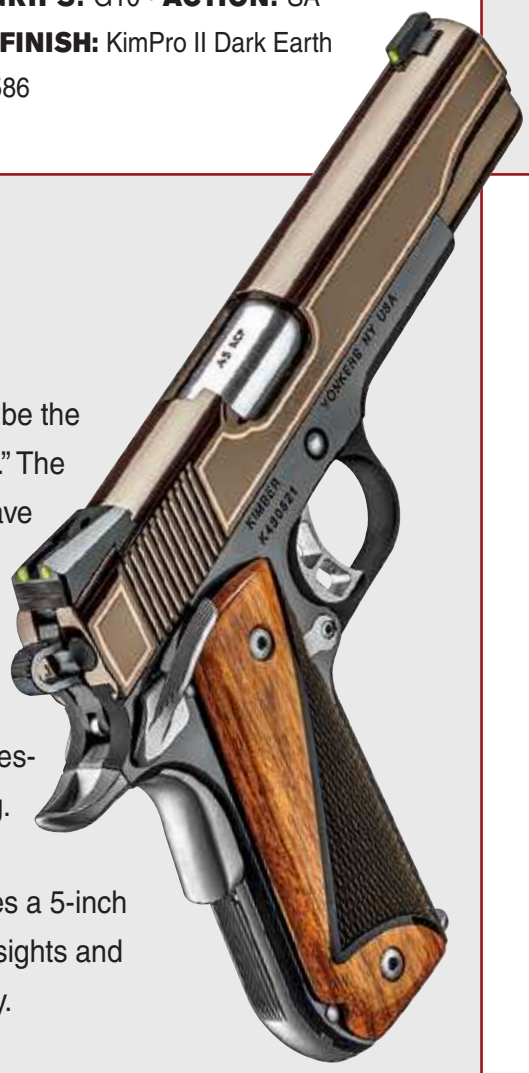


SPECIFICATIONS

CALIBER: .45 ACP
BARREL: 5.5 inches
OA LENGTH: 9.19 inches
WEIGHT: 40 ounces (empty)
CAPACITY: 7+1 • **GRIPS:** G10
SIGHTS: Tritium three-dot night
FINISH: KimPro II Dark Earth slide, Dark Green frame
ACTION: SA • **MSRP:** $1,738

CLASSIC CARRY ELITE

The word most used to describe the Classic Carry Elite is "striking." The round heel frame and slide have a two-tone (gunmetal rose/gold) PVD finish with fine-line engraving. The grips are made of French walnut with a Micarta inlay that has 24 lines-per-inch frontstrap checkering. If looks aren't enough, then the Classic Carry Elite features a 5-inch barrel, three-dot tritium night sights and an ambidextrous thumb safety.



SPECIFICATIONS

CALIBER: .45 ACP • **BARREL:** 5 inches • **OA LENGTH:** 8.7 inches
WEIGHT: 38 ounces (empty) • **SIGHTS:** Tritium three-dot night
FINISH: Gunmetal rose/gold PVD • **GRIPS:** Walnut, Micarta
CAPACITY: 8+1 • **MSRP:** $2,495

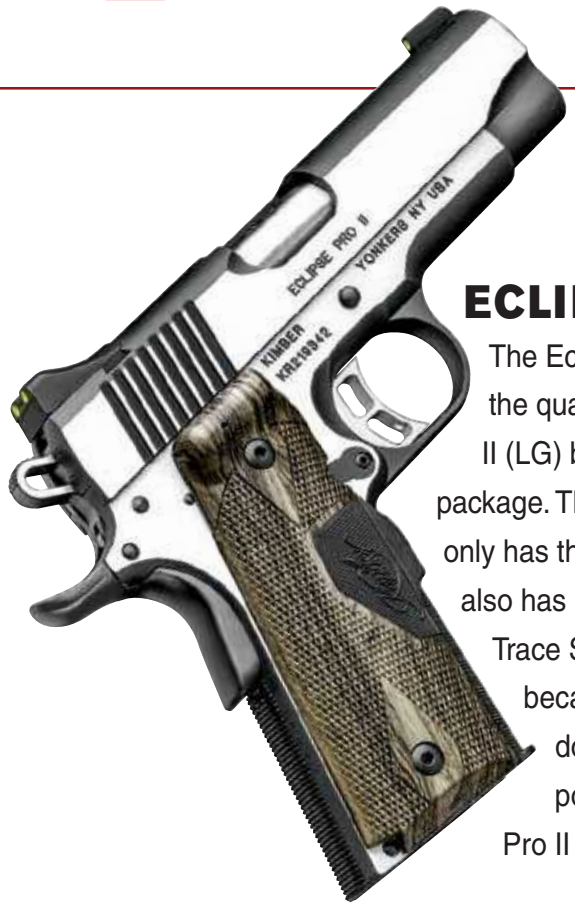
ECLIPSE CUSTOM II (LG)

The Eclipse pistols feature one of Kimber's trademark looks, with brushed polished flats contrasting with matte black frames and slides. They're also benchmarks in Kimber performance with match-grade, stainless steel barrels and fitted stainless bushings. The full-sized Eclipse Custom II (LG) ups its game with double-diamond Crimson Trace Slatewood grips to complement the three-dot tritium sights.



SPECIFICATIONS

CALIBER: .45 ACP • **BARREL:** 5 inches • **OA LENGTH:** 8.7 inches
WEIGHT: 38 ounces (empty) • **GRIPS:** Crimson Trace Slatewood
SIGHTS: Tritium three-dot night • **ACTION:** SA • **CAPACITY:** 8+1
FINISH: Polished stainless, matte black • **MSRP:** $1,589



ECLIPSE PRO II (LG)

The Eclipse Pro II (LG) has the all the qualities of the full Eclipse Pro II (LG) but in a Commander-sized package. The Eclipse Pro II (LG) not only has the shorter 4-inch barrel but also has double-diamond Crimson Trace Slatewood Lasergrips. Just because it is a smaller package does not mean the pistol's firepower is reduced. The Eclipse Pro II (LG) has an 8+1 capacity.

SPECIFICATIONS

CALIBER: .45 ACP • **BARREL:** 5.25 inches • **OA LENGTH:** 7.7 inches
WEIGHT: 35 ounces (empty) • **GRIPS:** Crimson Trace Slatewood
SIGHTS: Tritium three-dot night • **ACTION:** SA • **CAPACITY:** 8+1
FINISH: Polished stainless/matte black • **MSRP:** $1,589



ECLIPSE ULTRA II (LG)

For maximum concealability, the Eclipse Ultra II (LG) has an overall length of only 6.8 inches and is only 4.75 inches tall. It features a 3-inch, bull barrel and a stainless steel frame and slide. The Eclipse Ultra II (LG) has a 7+1 capacity in .45 ACP. The double-diamond Crimson Trace Slatewood Lasergrips offer fast targeting with easy activation even when the pistol is drawn from deep concealment.

SPECIFICATIONS

CALIBER: .45 ACP • **BARREL:** 3 inches • **OA LENGTH:** 6.8 inches
WEIGHT: 31 ounces (empty) • **GRIPS:** Crimson Trace Slatewood
SIGHTS: Tritium three-dot night • **CAPACITY:** 7+1
ACTION: SA • **FINISH:** Polished stainless, matte black • **MSRP:** $1,589



MICRO RAPTOR STAINLESS

The Micro Raptor Stainless features Custom Shop detail like scale serrations on the slide and feathered zebra wood grips. Function follows form on this compact pistol with its ambidextrous thumb safety, the self-illuminating, tritium, three-dot night sights and its corrosion-resistant satin stainless finish. A Carry Melt treatment is given to the Micro Raptor Stainless, making it virtually snag-free with no sharp edges to grab or impede your draw.

SPECIFICATIONS

CALIBER: .380 ACP • **BARREL:** 2.75 inches • **OA LENGTH:** 5.6 inches
WEIGHT: 13.4 ounces (empty) • **GRIPS:** Zebra wood
SIGHTS: Tritium three-dot night • **ACTION:** SA • **FINISH:** Satin silver
CAPACITY: 6+1 • **MSRP:** $960



MICRO RAPTOR

The Micro Raptor takes the Raptor aesthetics from the Custom Shop's 1911 series and micro sizes it. The scale serrations and feathered zebra wood grips give the Micro Raptor the lethal good looks of its .45 ACP sibling but in a smaller .380 ACP package made for deep-cover concealment. Tritium night sights and six-round magazines are standard on this CCW-ready pistol.

SPECIFICATIONS

CALIBER: .380 ACP • **BARREL:** 2.75 inches
OA LENGTH: 5.6 inches
WEIGHT: 13.4 ounces (empty) • **GRIPS:** Zebra wood
SIGHTS: Tritium three-dot night • **ACTION:** SA • **FINISH:** Matte black
CAPACITY: 6+1 • **MSRP:** $939

MICRO CRIMSON CARRY

The two-tone Micro Crimson Carry has a matte black stainless steel slide mated to a satin aluminum frame. Crimson Trace Lasergrips come standard, making this Micro a fast-to-target weapon no matter what position you might find yourself in. The Lasergrips have an ambidextrous activation button just under the triggerguard so it is very easy to project the laser's red dot on a target when seconds count.



SPECIFICATIONS

CALIBER: .380 ACP • **BARREL:** 2.75 inches • **OA LENGTH:** 5.6 inches
WEIGHT: 13.4 ounces (empty) • **GRIPS:** Crimson Trace Lasergrips
SIGHTS: Tritium three-dot night • **ACTION:** SA • **CAPACITY:** 6+1
FINISH: Matte black slide, satin aluminum frame • **MSRP:** $911

MICRO ADVOCATE

The Advocate has an extended-magazine basepad that increases the pistol's grip for better control. This a deep-cover pistol for those who cut their teeth on the 1911 platform. The matte black slide contrasts with the satin aluminum frame. Brown and purple G10 grips are available. The Advocate holds seven rounds of .380 ACP ammunition and weighs only 13.4 ounces.



SPECIFICATIONS

CALIBER: .380 ACP • **BARREL:** 2.75 inches
OA LENGTH: 5.6 inches • **ACTION:** SA
WEIGHT: 13.4 ounces (empty) • **GRIPS:** G10 (brown or purple)
SIGHTS: Tritium three-dot night
FINISH: Matte black slide/satin aluminum frame
CAPACITY: 6+1 • **MSRP:** $796





RUGER

Stainless .45 ACP ready for concealment and extreme duty!

BY **DENIS PRISBREY** • PHOTOS BY **STEVE WOODS**

In recent years Ruger's gotten quite cagey about discussing new projects before they're officially ready to roll on them, partially because of potential legal liabilities and partially because they don't want their market fans to get overly frustrated if new models take a while to show up on dealers' shelves after the initial announcements get out. For several years, while it seemed everybody else in the world was building 1911s, whenever Ruger was asked, "When are you going to do one?" the regular response was the official Ruger-code catchphrase, "Ruger has no plans." In other words, "We don't want to talk about it yet."

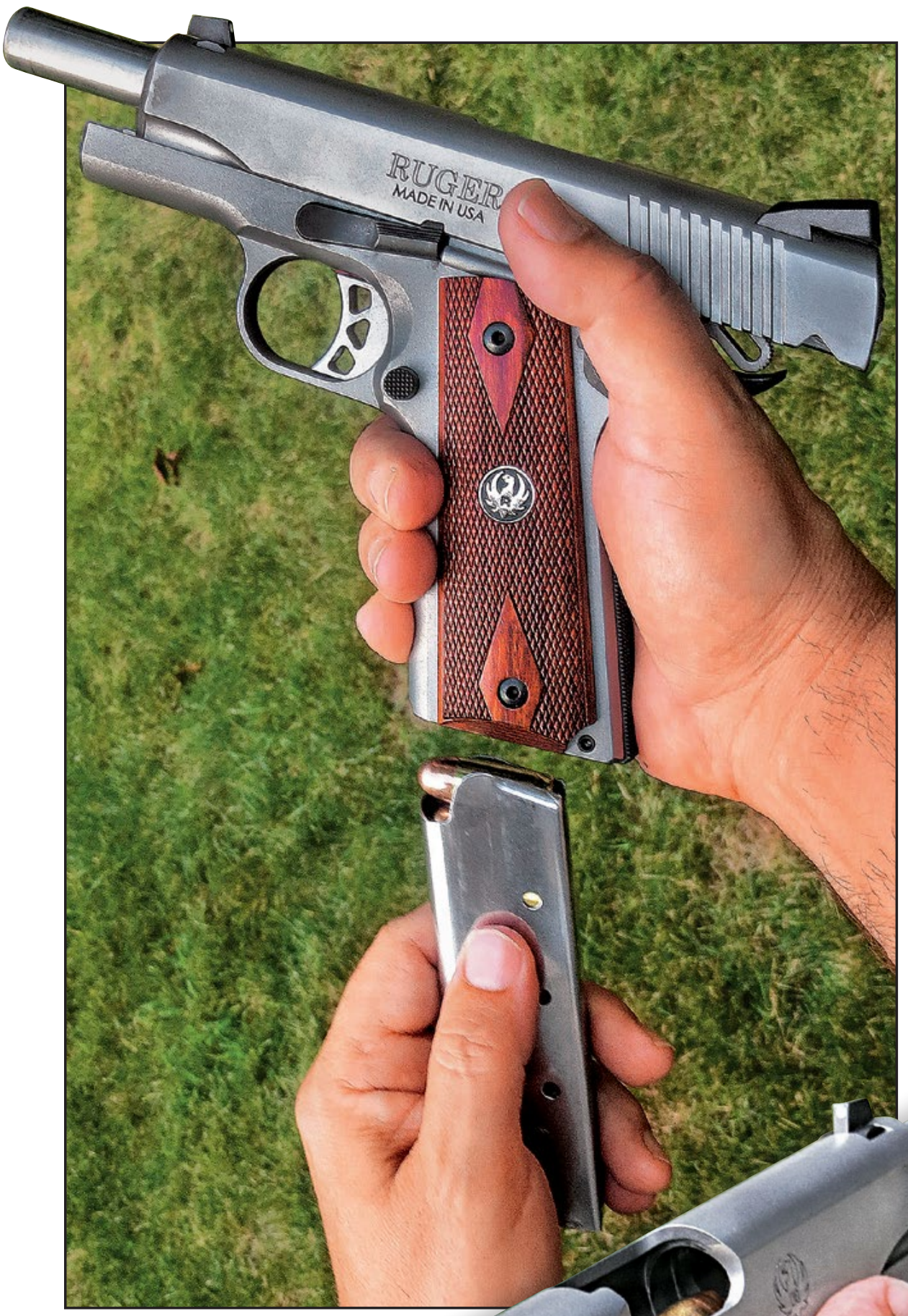
I used to get it myself, including a period of three or four years back when I was hearing from industry sources that Ruger was quietly looking for vendors to supply small parts for a 1911 pistol design. But when the company's ready, they're ready, and until they were, it was just a matter of waiting it out until the new Ruger SR1911 was formally introduced in April of 2011. Since then, the SR1911 has been one of the company's hottest sellers, with a foregone conclusion that a shorter Commander-sized version wouldn't be far off. It wasn't, arriving in 2013, and with a list of features normally running higher than its MSRP of $859.

SR1911CMD



Proudly made in Ruger's Arizona plant, this stainless, Commander-sized pistol packs full-sized .45 ACP power into an affordable, compact package.

Walt Rauch photo





(Above) Loading a mag is not a chore, as the mag well is chamfered for easier and quicker mag changes.

(Right) Ruger updated the Series 70 firing system design by using a titanium firing pin and heavy firing pin spring.

Robert Sadowski photos

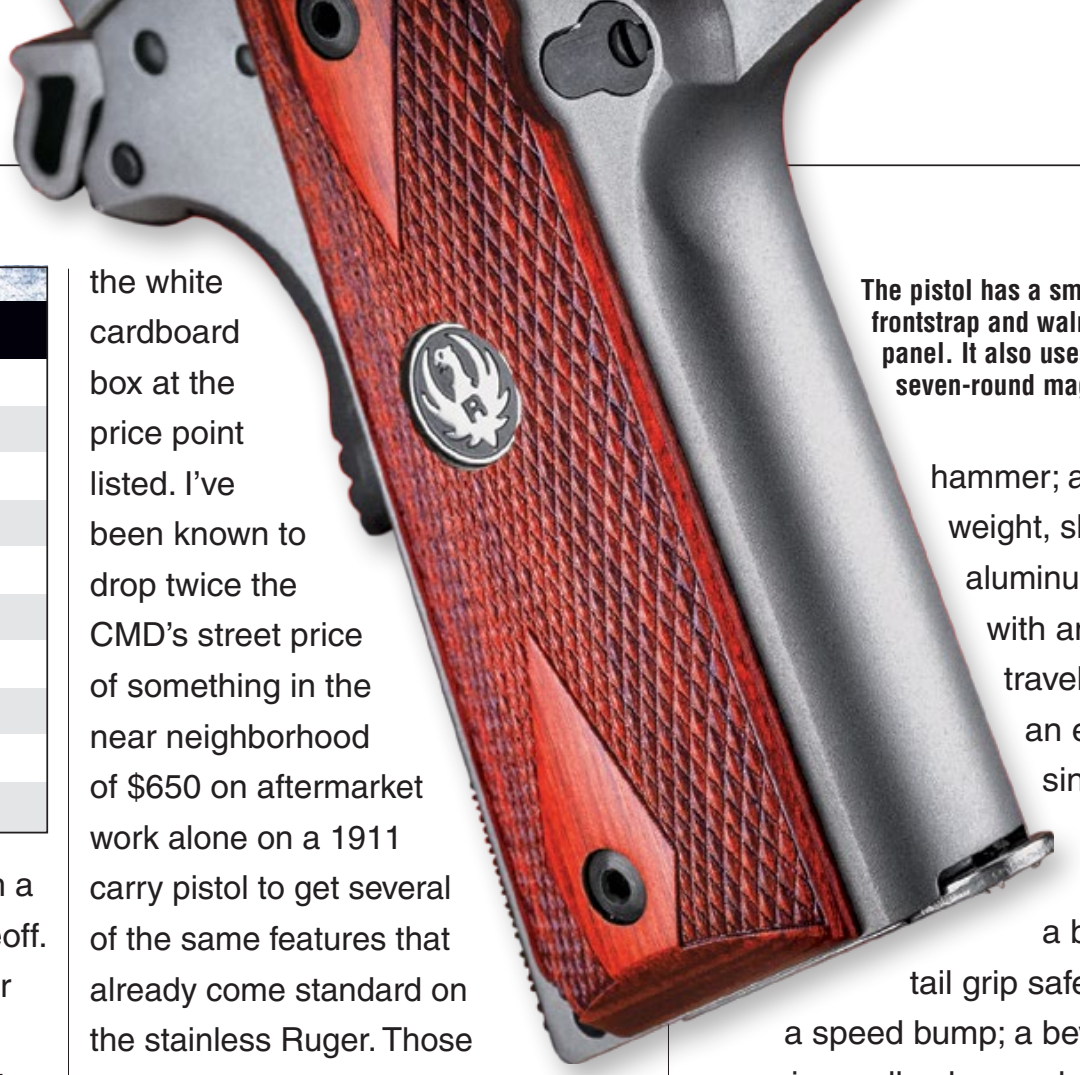
The SR1911CMD is described by Ruger as being a "Commander-style pistol," trading on Colt's 4.25-inch-barreled derivation of their Government Model, since "Commander" has become almost a generic title for the shorter setup. Since "SR1911CMD" has very little pizzazz as a descriptor, and Commander is a Colt model, we'll just call it the CMD here.

COMMANDER SIZING

The idea behind Commander-sized dimensions was originally to render the full-sized pistol down to a more compact and lighter configuration for military aircrews, and although it wasn't a procurement success resulting in large government contract sales, it was almost immediately recognized as a very efficient pistol for those who liked the 1911 platform's power, but not its bulk, for concealed-carry applications. My first exposure to one was at the age of 17, when a very dapper-looking guy in a suit standing next to me at a gun shop counter produced one from under his jacket to discuss it with the clerk. I thought then that it was an impressive piece of hardware that obviously concealed well, since I hadn't noticed any indications that the plainclothes detective was armed.

Years later, my first 1911 pattern was a Commander, and my most customized personal carry pistol still is a Commander. You might say I like the idea, and you'd be right if you did.

Aside from being more concealable, those who favor the shorter barrel often find it can be more dynamic in the hand (as in easier to maneuver) and don't



The pistol has a smooth frontstrap and walnut grip panel. It also uses flush-fitting seven-round magazines.

SPECIFICATIONS

RUGER SR1911CMD

CALIBER	.45 ACP
BARREL	4.25 inches
OA LENGTH	7.75 inches
WEIGHT	36.4 ounces (empty)
GRIPS	Walnut
SIGHTS	Novak three-dot
ACTION	SA
FINISH	Stainless
CAPACITY	7+1
MSRP	$859

mind the slight loss of velocity from a 0.75-inch-shorter tube as the tradeoff. There's also slightly less muzzle for a gun grabber to get a grip on. The pistol uses the same wide range of magazines and popular aftermarket parts as its bigger brother, and it retains that famous "Oh, crap!" intimidation factor that can often shut down anybody making the mistake of looking into its nearly half-inch bore from the wrong end.

There is one often-quoted drawback to the abbreviated top end, though. Conventional wisdom states that the shorter you go with the 1911, the less reliable it becomes. Most professional instructors will advise that if you're determined to go with a 1911 pattern in today's modern polymer pistol world, go long for that reason. I've never run into reliability issues with my own Commanders, but the specter of cycling failures is always there in trying a new shorter-barreled 1911, as it was when I unlimbered the new CMD at the old quarry for its range session. But, we'll get back to that. Let's look at the pistol first.

CMD SPECS

The CMD is a nice-looking representation, and I was honestly surprised to see what was included in the white cardboard box at the price point listed. I've been known to drop twice the CMD's street price of something in the near neighborhood of $650 on aftermarket work alone on a 1911 carry pistol to get several of the same features that already come standard on the stainless Ruger. Those include a matte grey bead-blasted finish; three-dot, windage-adjustable Novak sights; a skeletonized hammer; a lightweight, skeletonized aluminum trigger with an over-travel setscrew; an extended, single-side thumb safety; a beavertail grip safety with a speed bump; a beveled magazine well; a lowered and flared ejection port; a checkered steel mainspring housing; and a throated feed ramp/chamber.



Ruger equips the pistol with steel Novak front and rear sights set up in a three-dot configuration for fast targeting.

A closer look shows excellent machining—none of the razor-sharp edges that I paid extra to have removed on some other 1911s. The CMD has a uniform finish, with lines that are straight where they're supposed to be straight and curved where they're not. The slide's rear doesn't overhang the frame's rear, there's no excessive vertical trigger movement, the thumb safety snicks on and off positively (but not too positively), and there is no hole in the frame around the rear of the thumb safety, as found on some other 1911s, that can collect dust. The frame-to-slide-fit is relatively tight without being too tight; my sample's barrel was correctly fitted, with no downward play under thumb pressure through the ejection port; the hammer shows a distinct absence of rub marks on either side from contact with the slide during cycling; the dust cover walls are uniform and not thinner on one side than

PERFORMANCE

RUGER SR1911CMD .45 ACP

LOAD	VELOCITY	ACCURACY
Black Hills 185 JHP (brass case)	979	3.75
Black Hills 185 JHP (steel case)	822	2.75
Federal 230 Hydra-Shok JHP	887	4.38
Winchester 230 Personal Protection JHP	905	3.63

Bullet weight measured in grains, velocity in fps by chronograph, and accuracy in inches for best five-shot groups at 25 yards.



the other; and the rear of the extractor is almost perfectly flush and not clocked at the rear of the slide. These are all key external inspection points for me with new 1911s as indicators of how much attention a given maker pays to details in overall quality, and the new Ruger gets a high rating in those areas.

So, with extra features and an above-average fit and finish, how does Ruger keep the price so low?

“ ...the pistol was controllable, reliable with a clean 4.25-pound trigger break, and within the accuracy parameters... ”

Alternative materials. If anybody in the gun-making business has a right to look outside the traditional 1911 box, it’s Ruger, a company founded on alternative production methods. John Browning designed the 1911 pistol in an era of very labor-intensive production techniques involving equipment that’s long outdated today, time-consuming processes and materials that were frankly inferior to what’s available now in certain areas such as heat-treating. In bringing out the company’s SR1911 and SR1911CMD, Ruger simply brought it up to modern times with modern processes and modern materials that eliminated a sizable chunk of the costs involved in doing it the old way.

The two biggest cost savers were materials—infinitely quicker-to-produce metal-injection-molded (MIM) small parts and a cast frame—and automated machinery. The CMD’s frame is cast at Ruger Precision Metals. Contrary to popular opinion, there’s nothing inherently wrong with a properly cast 1911 frame, and Ruger’s are the best on the market. Casting allows more consistency in certain dimensions, much less machine time, and when correctly done, there’s no loss of strength or longevity. The Ruger CMD uses a slide machined from 416 stainless bar stock, and the exact composition of the stainless frame is a proprietary secret, but the difference between



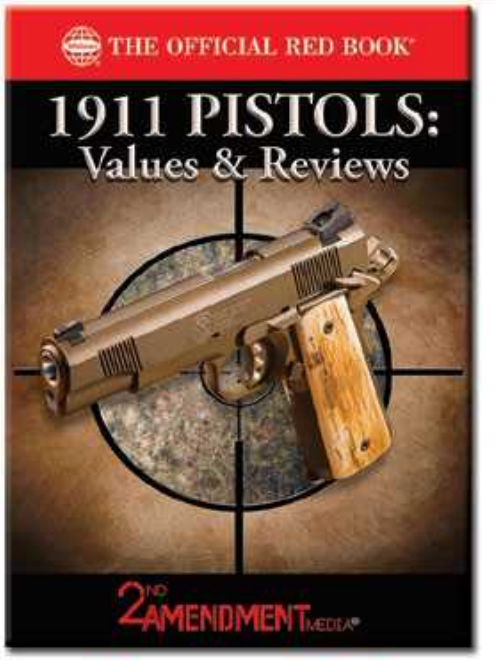
The steel mainspring housing and extended beavertail grip safety are black, contrasting nicely with the stainless frame and hammer.



The slide, machined from 416 stainless steel bar stock, features a lowered and flared ejection port for enhanced reliability.

the two materials eliminates the galling common to early stainless 1911s by other makers.

A further benefit to this cast 1911 frame is the integral plunger tube that tensions the thumb safety and slide lock on the left side, just above the grip panel. Normally staked on a forged frame, this tube (with its enclosed, double-headed, spring-loaded plunger) is a relative weak point in the 1911's design in that it can come unstaked, and if it drops off completely, it affects the safety's ability to lock on or off and hinders the slide lock from doing just that. Here, since the tube is cast as part of the frame, it would take a substantial whack to knock it loose or affect the function of those two important parts.



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The traditional checkered, double-diamond, walnut grips—featuring Ruger's medallion—are made by Altamont, another company known for quality. Also note the checkered magazine release.

MIM parts? I know, whether you hate them or don't care, they're here to stay, and again, it's a matter of how well they're made. Metal-injection molding produces more uniform parts, requiring less human hands-on involvement, and with the right formulation (which advances regularly) in the right spot, it can reduce costs without diminishing function. MIM parts in the CMD include the front and rear sights, hammer, thumb safety, grip safety, sear, disconnector, barrel link, magazine catch, firing-pin stop, slide stop and the ejector—all outsourced to Ruger's strict specifications, as the company has no MIM production capability of its own.

Elsewhere, the CMD's barrel is CNC-machined from bar stock in-house with broached rifling. The firing pin is titanium to allow the pistol to pass various drop test requirements without resorting to an internal passive firing-pin block, which the CMD does not have. The included stainless magazines are made for Ruger by Checkmate, a well-known American supplier to several 1911 brands. Finally, the traditional diamond-pattern checkered grip panels are made by Altamont.

DOWNRANGE

First lubed with white lithium grease on its rails, on a 49-degree day in the quarry, the CMD ran through four different factory loads, two 185-grain JHPs and two 230-grain JHPs, at 25 yards without a single malfunction either off the sandbag for accuracy or off my own two feet for rapid-fire controllability, including Black Hills' steel-cased ammunition. It wasn't quite perfect, though. The pistol shot consistently 4 inches low at 25 yards, ejection was literally all over the place (bouncing off my forehead, rolling down my shirt front, pinging off my headset ear cup, dropping on the shooting table, arcing back 15 feet over my



The SR1911CMD has a lightweight, skeletonized and serrated aluminum trigger with a clean break.



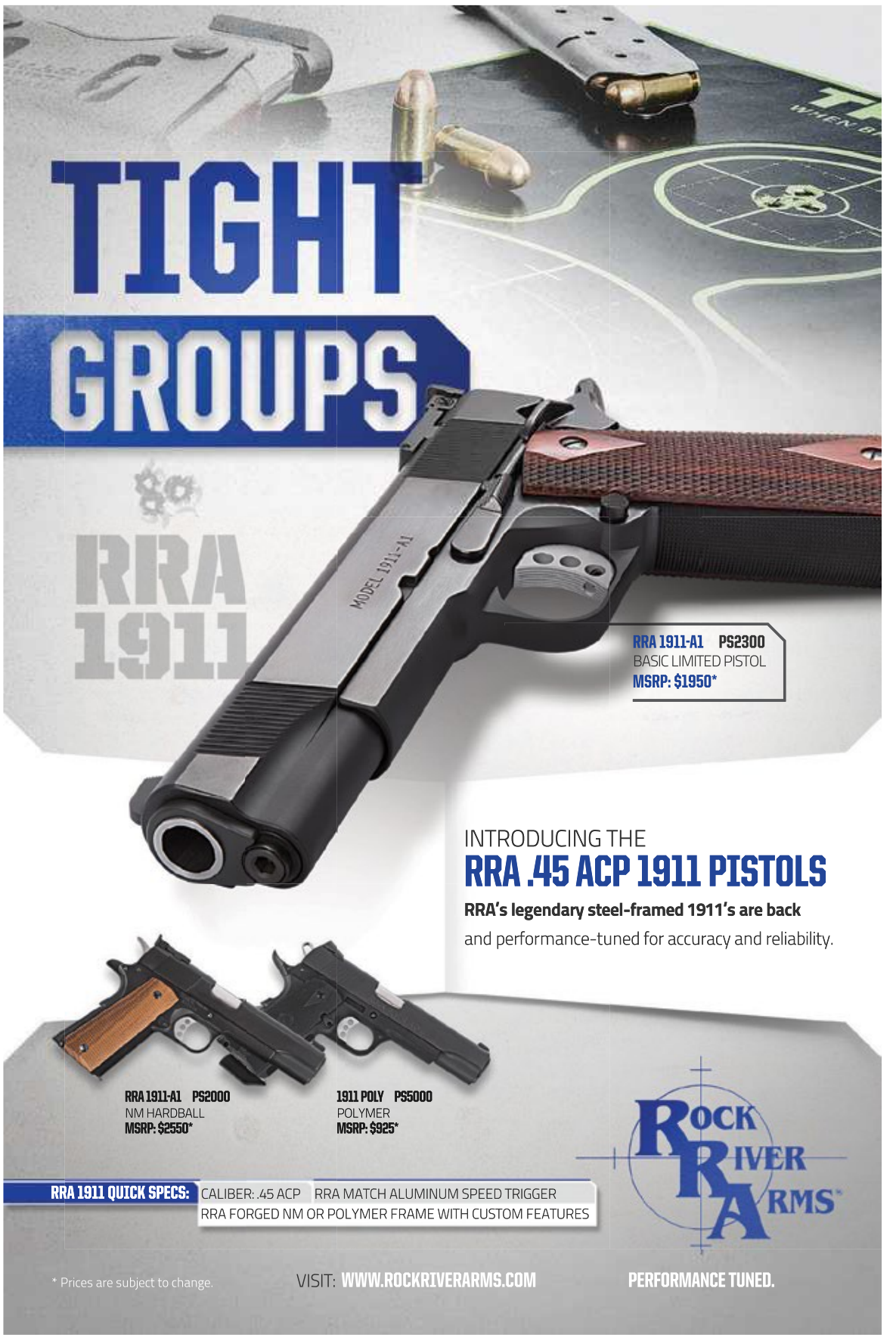
Ruger's attention to detail shines through on the smooth, bead-blasted slide, which features forward-angled cocking serrations at the rear.

head, landing on the ground a foot to the right of the table, etc.), and the hex-head grip screws loosened. The extractor is CNC-machined from alloy round stock (not MIM) and can be tuned for more consistent ejection if needed, the grip screws just need a good beginning torque-down, and Ruger was made aware of the pistol's low point of impact.

Otherwise, the pistol was controllable, reliable with a clean 4.25-pound trigger break, and within the accuracy parameters acceptable for a stock 1911 variant in a defensive role. Like any 1911-style pistol, you can shoot it as is, straight from the maker, or sink more money into "accurizing" with a tighter barrel bushing, night sights and so on.

A full-featured pistol at an entry-level price deserves a hard look for anybody in the market for a new 1911, and a quality Commander-sized version is never a bad carry choice if you can handle .45 ACP power levels. For more information, visit ruger.com. **1911**





Demand for the venerable 1911 pistol remains steady after all these years, and is even increasing in some cases.

Numerous new designs in the handgun market have done little to slow the popularity of the 1911 pistol. It remains one of the most concealable, accurate and easy-to-shoot pistols on the market today. Choices abound with numerous compact and even subcompact models available. Top competitors, tactical operators and enthusiasts alike continue to use full-sized 1911 pistols in various calibers and designs to great effect. Any talk of its demise, or even decrease in its popularity, is just that—talk—because the 1911 is selling in record numbers with no indication that will change any time soon.

One of the most popular moves among manufacturers in the last couple years has been to the more-affordable-to-shoot 9mm cartridge, and the 1911 is no exception. Increasingly efficient for self-defense, the 9mm is subsequently becoming the caliber of choice for many. Advances in machining, construction and demand have provided several solid 1911 pistols in this caliber. Easy concealment, soft recoil and incredible accuracy make the 1911 platform an excellent choice for this caliber. Let's take a quick look at some top choices for 9mm 1911 pistols for self-defense and concealed carry.



9INES

When it comes to less recoil, less carry signature, less overall cost and more rounds on tap– THESE 1911s HAVE IT!

BY **DAVID BAHDE** • PHOTOS BY **MANUFACTURERS**



COLT DEFENDER

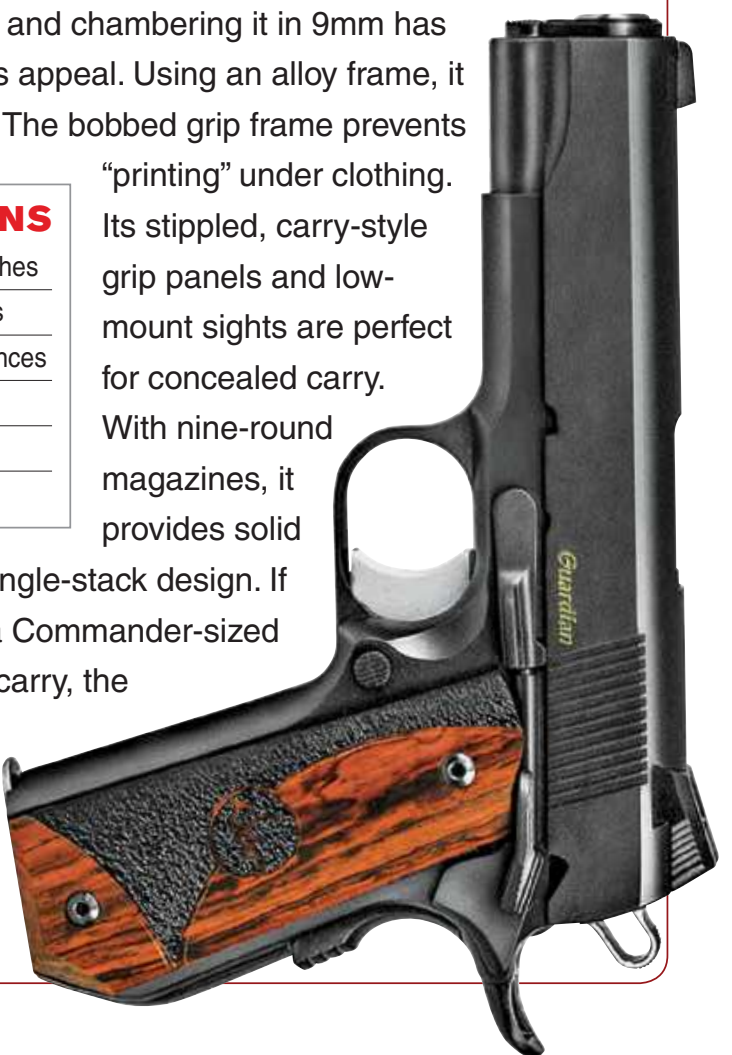
Having owned several Colt Defender pistols over the years, I can say that they have all been reliable, accurate and comfortable to carry. Adding a 9mm version to the lineup only makes it better. Soft-shooting, accurate and easy to shoot, the 9mm Defender is ready to go to work right out of the box. Rubber grips lock this compact pistol in place, allowing for smooth operation and little recoil. An upswept grip safety, enhanced hammer and aluminum trigger provide for a solid grip. Lowering and flaring the ejection port facilitates better reliability. For those looking to get a 3-inch-barreled 1911 with proven reliability, the Defender chambered in 9mm is a solid choice. (colt.com; 800-962-2658)

SPECIFICATIONS	
BARREL	3 inches
OA LENGTH	6.75 inches
WEIGHT	25 ounces
FINISH	Stainless
CAPACITY	8+1
MSRP	$1,200

DAN WESSON GUARDIAN

Dan Wesson's Guardian is one of the most popular Commander-sized 1911 pistols available. Since its introduction, it has only gained in popularity, and chambering it in 9mm has certainly added to its appeal. Using an alloy frame, it remains lightweight. The bobbed grip frame prevents "printing" under clothing. Its stippled, carry-style grip panels and low-mount sights are perfect for concealed carry. With nine-round magazines, it provides solid capacity in a slim, single-stack design. If you are looking for a Commander-sized 1911 for concealed carry, the Dan Wesson Guardian should be at the top of your list. (cz-usa.com; 800-955-4486)

SPECIFICATIONS	
BARREL	4.25 inches
OA LENGTH	8 inches
WEIGHT	28.8 ounces
FINISH	Black
CAPACITY	9+1
MSRP	$1,558





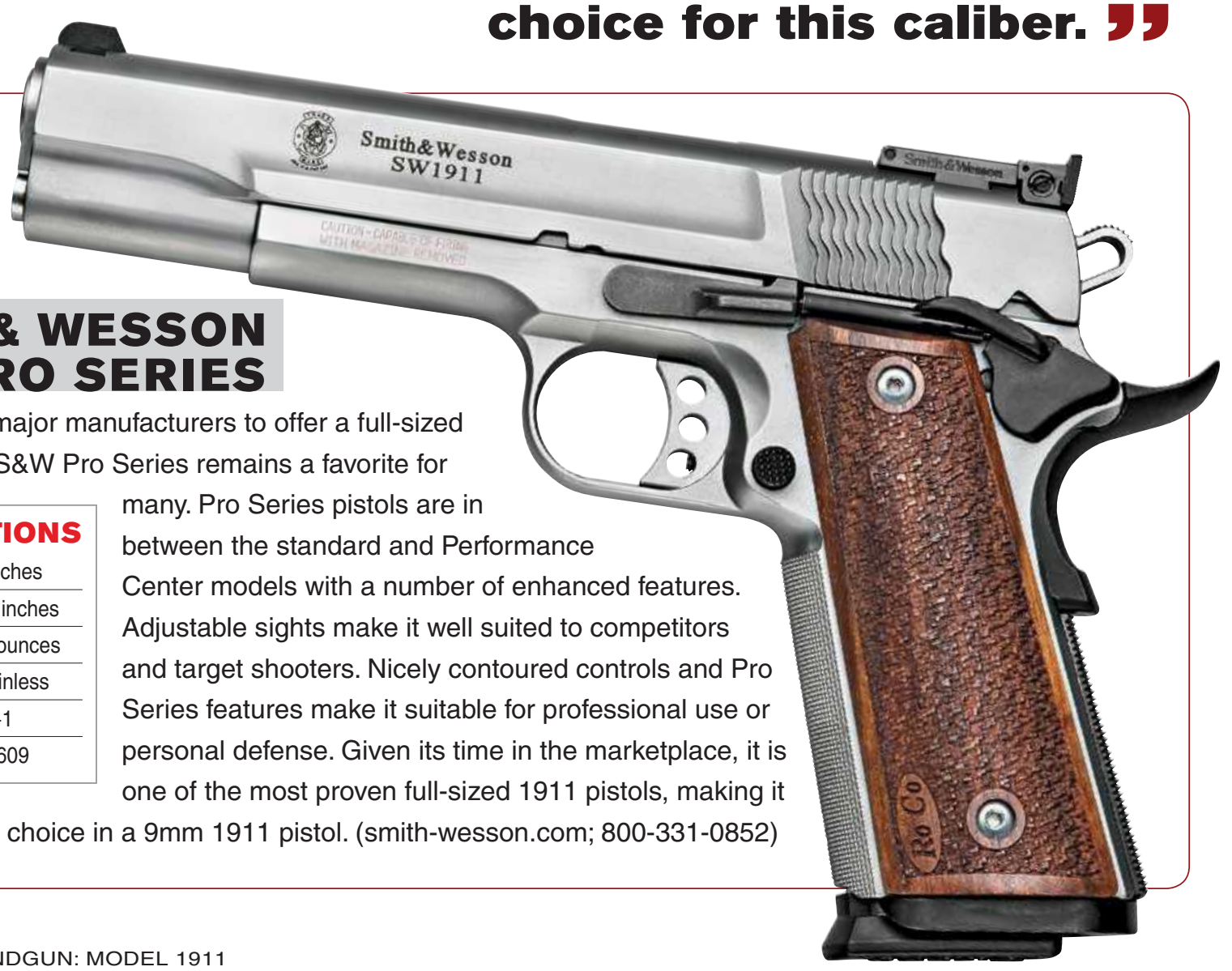
KIMBER AEGIS II

Kimber is a leader in the 1911 market with a plethora of choices. Kimber 1911 pistols are carried by professionals and enthusiasts alike, and its Aegis line is one of the most popular 9mm 1911 pistols out there. Available in full-sized, Pro and Ultra sizes, it provides the perfect 1911 pistol for any use. Aluminum frames keep things light, and complete "melting" makes it comfortable to carry. Low recoil allows for solid accuracy and custom touches like front strap checking and tritium night sights make it well suited to self-defense use. No matter the size, the Aegis line is a solid choice in a 9mm 1911 pistol. (kimberamerica.com; 888-243-4522)

SPECIFICATIONS

BARREL	3 inches
OA LENGTH	6.8 inches
WEIGHT	25 ounces
FINISH	Satin silver
CAPACITY	8+1
MSRP	$1,331

"Easy concealment, soft recoil and incredible accuracy make the 1911 platform an excellent choice for this caliber."



SMITH & WESSON 1911 PRO SERIES

One of the first major manufacturers to offer a full-sized 9mm 1911, the S&W Pro Series remains a favorite for many. Pro Series pistols are in between the standard and Performance Center models with a number of enhanced features. Adjustable sights make it well suited to competitors and target shooters. Nicely contoured controls and Pro Series features make it suitable for professional use or personal defense. Given its time in the marketplace, it is one of the most proven full-sized 1911 pistols, making it an excellent first choice in a 9mm 1911 pistol. (smith-wesson.com; 800-331-0852)

SPECIFICATIONS

BARREL	5 inches
OA LENGTH	8.7 inches
WEIGHT	41 ounces
FINISH	Stainless
CAPACITY	10+1
MSRP	$1,609



REMINGTON R1 ENHANCED

The Remington R1, introduced in 2010, is a relative newcomer to the 1911 market. But Big Green's contribution to the field is an eminently solid one, with precision-machined parts produced to ultra-tight tolerances for stellar accuracy and smoother shooting. Remington makes several versions of the R1, and the only one chambered, so far, in 9mm is the Enhanced model. Featuring a 5-inch, match-grade barrel, a skeletonized match trigger, a widened thumb safety, custom grips and a fiber-optic front sight, the R1 Enhanced is certainly feature-packed, especially for a well-made 1911 priced under $1,000. (remington.com; 877-801-1911)

SPECIFICATIONS

BARREL	5 inches
OA LENGTH	8.5 inches
WEIGHT	40 ounces
FINISH	Satin black oxide
CAPACITY	8+1
MSRP	$940

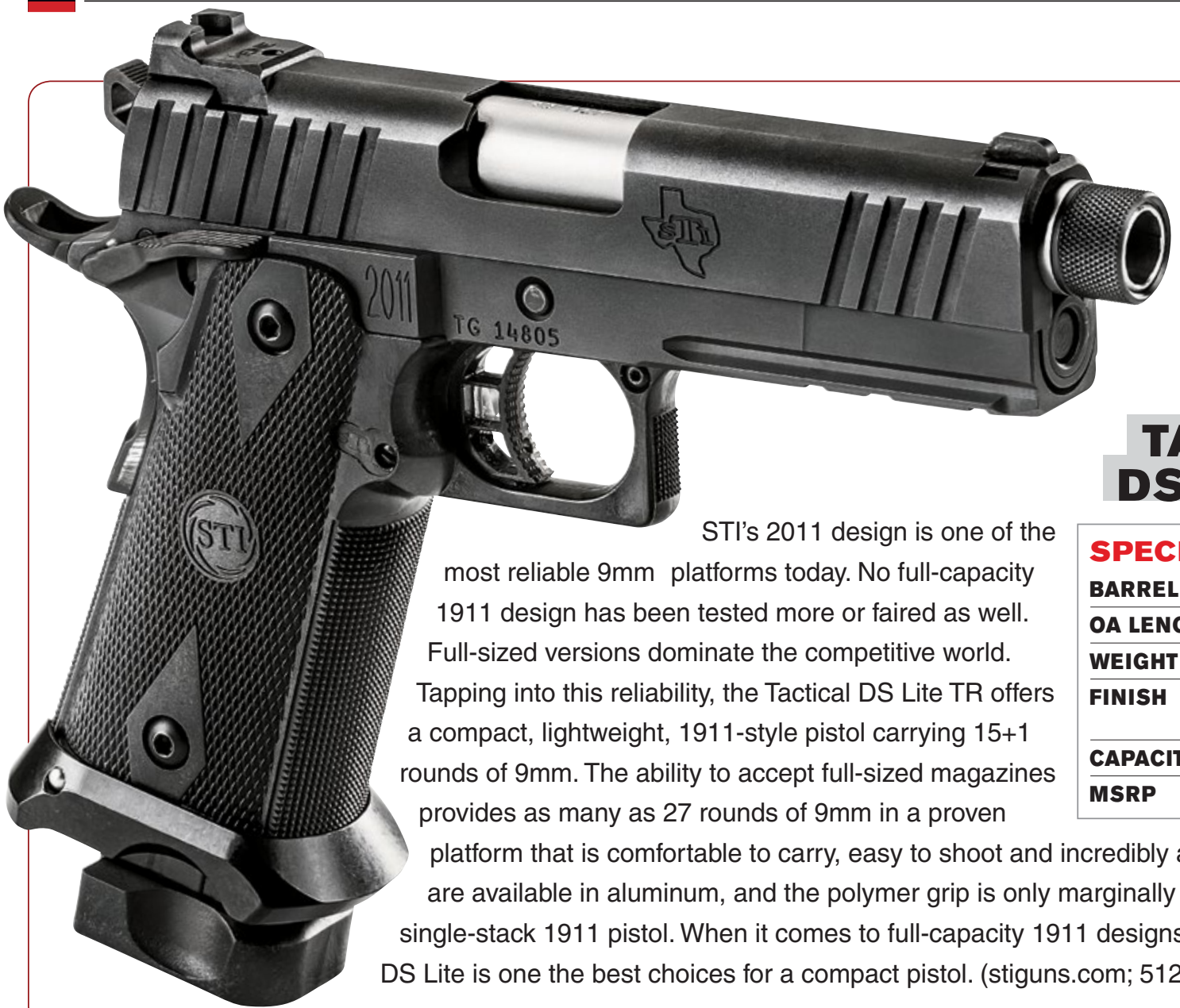


SPRINGFIELD ARMORY RANGE OFFICER

Springfield Armory's latest 1911 offering in 9mm is the Range Officer. Designed to be ready for competition out of the box, the Range Officer is incredibly popular with first-time 1911 buyers. This pistol has the same quality forged frame and slide used on the Springfield Trophy Match and TRP models, and it comes with adjustable sights. Precision fitting provides for excellent accuracy. The high-swept grip safety, flat mainspring housing and long trigger make for solid accuracy. With its soft-shooting characteristics, it is perfect for those spending extended time on the range. (springfield-armory.com; 800-680-6686)

SPECIFICATIONS

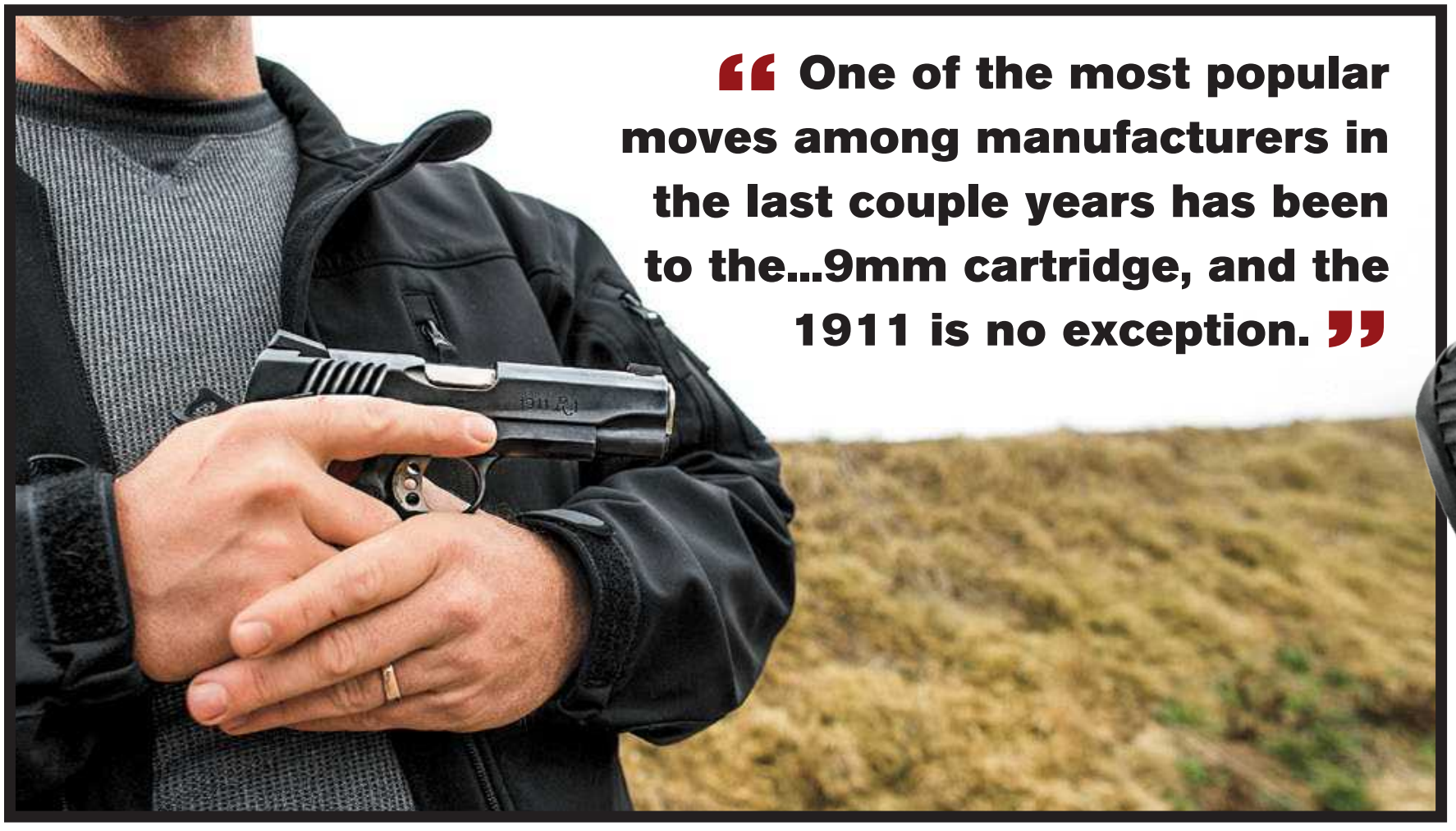
BARREL	5 inches
OA LENGTH	8.7 inches
WEIGHT	41 ounces
CAPACITY	9+1
FINISH	Parkerized
MSRP	$899



STI TACTICAL DS LITE TR

SPECIFICATIONS	
BARREL	4 inches
OA LENGTH	6.75 inches
WEIGHT	32 ounces
FINISH	Black Cerakote
CAPACITY	15+1
MSRP	$2,299

STI's 2011 design is one of the most reliable 9mm platforms today. No full-capacity 1911 design has been tested more or faired as well. Full-sized versions dominate the competitive world. Tapping into this reliability, the Tactical DS Lite TR offers a compact, lightweight, 1911-style pistol carrying 15+1 rounds of 9mm. The ability to accept full-sized magazines provides as many as 27 rounds of 9mm in a proven platform that is comfortable to carry, easy to shoot and incredibly accurate. Frames are available in aluminum, and the polymer grip is only marginally larger than a single-stack 1911 pistol. When it comes to full-capacity 1911 designs, the STI Tactical DS Lite is one the best choices for a compact pistol. (stiguns.com; 512-819-0656)



"One of the most popular moves among manufacturers in the last couple years has been to the...9mm cartridge, and the 1911 is no exception."



TAURUS 1911

Taurus is well known for its revolvers, but it makes fine 1911s, too. Its 9mm Government Model-sized pistol can be had in either stainless steel or with a blued finish. Feature-packed but affordably priced under $900, the Taurus 1911 comes equipped with genuine ramped Novak sights, an ambidextrous thumb safety and a lightened, skeletonized trigger for a crisp pulls. The Taurus 1911 9mm accommodates a nine-round magazine for a total capacity of 9+1. (taurususa.com; 800-327-3776)

SPECIFICATIONS

BARREL	5 inches
OA LENGTH	7.87 inches
WEIGHT	8.8 ounces
FINISH	Stainless or blued
CAPACITY	9+1
MSRP	$719-826

WILSON COMBAT CQB ELITE

Wilson Combat builds some of the finest 1911 pistols you can buy. The company's proven track record, attention to detail and dedication to the 1911 platform makes it a top choice for many. The CQB and CQB Elite are solid combat pistols built with self-defense, duty or hard use in mind. Built one at a time, by hand, these pistols offer custom design, proven parts and Wilson's 100-percent satisfaction guarantee. Having used one extensively, it has proven to be the most reliable 9mm 1911 pistols I've tested to date, exhibiting stunning accuracy and reliability. Also from Wilson Combat and available in 9mm is the new Hackathorn Special. (wilsoncombat.com; 800-955-4856)

SPECIFICATIONS

BARREL	5 inches
OA LENGTH	8.7 inches
WEIGHT	36.6 ounces
FINISH	Armor-Tuff
CAPACITY	10+1
MSRP	$3,425

RANGE OFFICER COMPACT

SPRINGFIELD ARMORY ★★★★

is most famously known for its innovative polymer-framed 3.3 XD-S .45 ACP, the smallest production .45 ACP semi-auto in the world, but the company established its early reputation building Springfield versions of the legendary Model 1911. To this day, the company remains one of the leading custom manufacturers of high-quality 1911-style semi-auto pistols in the world.

When the word “custom” comes into any description associated with a contemporary 1911 pistol, the price becomes commensurate with the gun’s features, and Springfield has some 1911 models in its arsenal running upwards of $2,000. However, the experience Springfield has gained over the years in fine-tuning 1911 actions, as well as building specialized frames, slides and barrels, has also given it the capability to produce a target-grade 1911 for what amounts to little more than the price of a standard pistol. Enter the Range Officer model.

Introduced in 2011, the Range Officer provided shooters with a competition-ready .45 ACP for under $1,000. For $899, the Range Officer delivers a 5-inch, stainless steel, match-grade barrel, a fully adjustable target rear sight, a handsomely parkerized frame and slide, a flat mainspring housing, a beavertail grip safety, a Delta hammer, a speed trigger, a beveled magazine well, a lowered and flared ejection port, diamond checkered walnut grips and two 7-round magazines. What you have is a pistol that shoots well beyond its price tag, and it even includes a Springfield carrying case, an injection-molded paddle holster and a double magazine pouch. So what more could you ask for?



Yamil Sued photo

Springfield's .45 is sized just right for competition or everyday carry.

BY **DENNIS ADLER**



The new Range Officer Compact from Springfield Armory has several custom-grade features that'll help you reign on the range or mean streets, including high-visibility sights; a speed trigger; a 4-inch, match-grade, fully supported, bull barrel and more.



The Range Officer Compact features a lowered and flared ejection port for enhanced reliability. Also note the loaded-chamber indicator, a cutout at the rear of the ejection port, that shows the rim of a chambered cartridge.

The answer is the Range Officer Compact, a Commander-sized version designed for either competitive shooting or concealed carry use. It is the same high-quality pistol, but refined for a more specific purpose and fitted with some additional upgrades and specialized features that set it apart from other compact 1911s in its price range.

TAKING COMMAND

When the test gun arrived, I had certain expectations before I even opened the case. And it was all there, everything I anticipated from Springfield, and a couple of things I didn't. For one, unlike the Government Model Range Officer, the RO Compact uses a polished bull barrel, a dual recoil spring assembly and a full-length guide rod. All were unexpected, as these features generally run up the price. The 4-inch, match grade, stainless steel, bull barrel has a fully supported ramp, and the full-length guide rod is surprisingly easy to remove when field-stripping the RO Compact. To minimize its weight, Springfield uses a forged aluminum alloy frame with a durable black hardcoat anodized finish, while the 6.25-inch-long slide is forged carbon steel with a black Parkerized finish. This is the same quality forged frame and slide used on the Springfield Trophy Match and TRP models, and provides a precision fit identical to these considerably more expensive 1911s. At the rear is a dovetailed, white-dot, low-profile, combat sight, and at the business end is a raised, dovetailed blade with a red fiber-optic insert.

Like the Government-sized Range Officer, the RO Compact has a flat, finely checkered mainspring housing, a raised palm swell and a beavertail grip safety (also all black), a serrated Delta-style (skeletonized) hammer, a single-sided thumb safety, a skeletonized speed trigger with a 5- to 6-pound pull, and the same lowered and flared ejection port. Although leaning more toward a concealed-carry sidearm, the RO Compact is equally suited for competition thanks to its lightweight trigger, while the beavertail grip safety and flat mainspring housing make

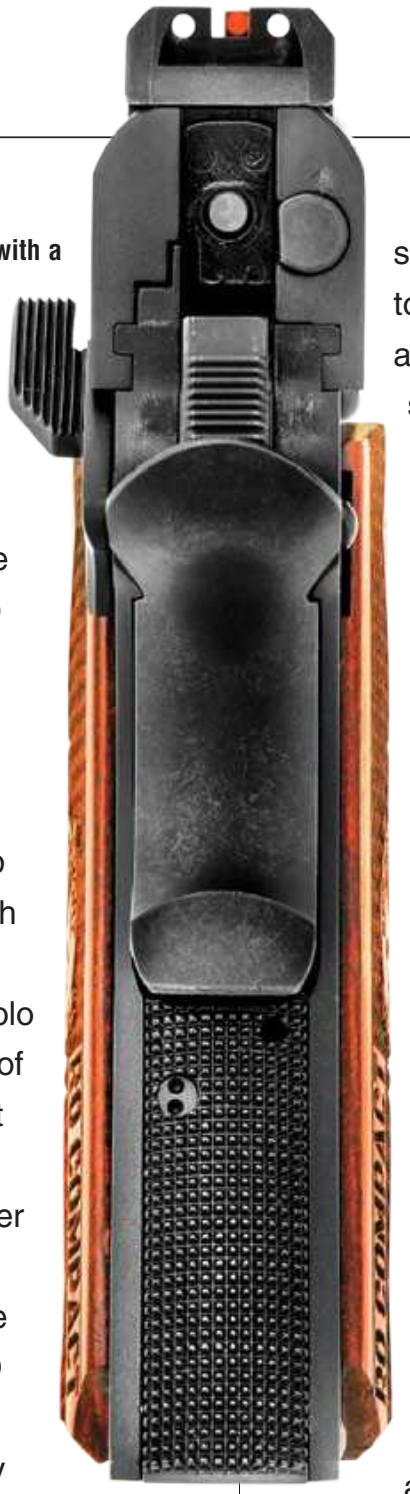


The pistol's standard features include a flat, checkered mainspring housing, an extended beavertail grip safety and a low-profile rear sight.

SPECIFICATIONS

SPRINGFIELD RANGE OFFICER COMPACT

CALIBER	.45 ACP
BARREL	4 inches
OA LENGTH	7.6 inches
WEIGHT	28.5 ounces (empty)
GRIPS	Cocobolo
SIGHTS	Fiber-optic front, white-dot rear
ACTION	SA
FINISH	Parkerized
CAPACITY	6+1
MSRP	$899



Springfield equips the 1911 with a left-side-mounted safety and Thinline cocobolo grips.

it a very comfortable pistol to hold for extended periods.

For concealment, the RO Compact has a grip frame that measures 5 inches from the base of the beveled magazine well to the top of the rear sight, a narrow grip width of 1.32 inches with Thinline Cross Cannon double-diamond cocobolo grips, an overall length of 7.6 inches and a weight of only 28.5 ounces unloaded. While the smaller frame does cost you one round, dropping the capacity to 6+1, the RO Compact's balance and ease of operation easily compensate for the tradeoff.

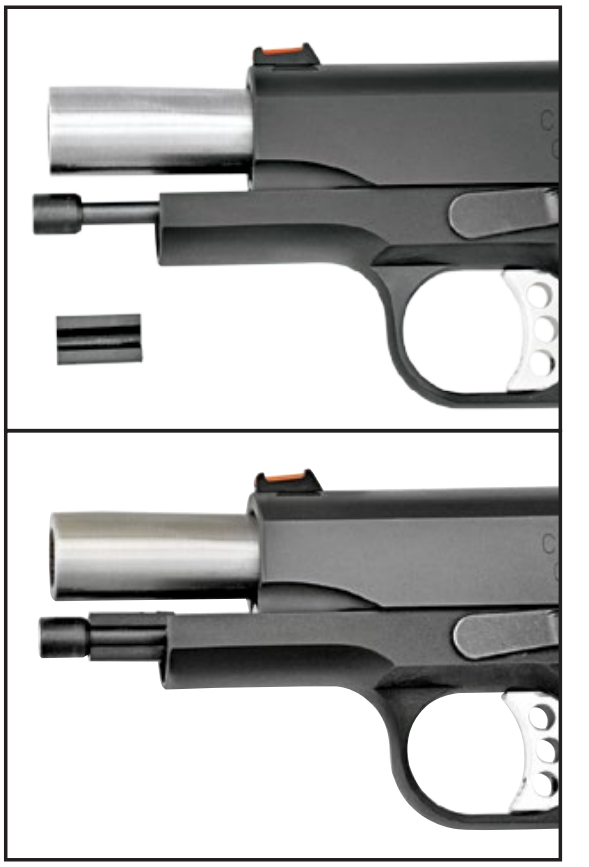
Foregoing the often time-consuming methods for field-stripping 1911s with full-length guide rods, the RO Compact has a quick takedown procedure by making use of a simple plastic "takedown" piece that fits over the guide rod (with the slide locked back) to relieve spring tension and allow easy removal of the assembly from the slide. The slide stop lever pulls out and goes back in with little effort, so this gun is truly as easy to handle on the workbench as it is on the range. (This same takedown procedure is also used by Springfield for Micro Compact, Ultra Compact, V-10, Compact and Champion models).

The Range Officer Compact is thin and easy to conceal, with an overall length of 7.6 inches.

SHINING AT THE RANGE

Over the last 30 odd years, I've sent a lot of .45 hardball and tactical ammunition downrange, and a finely built 1911 with a tuned action is a hard gun to beat for durability, accuracy and handling. The multitude of improvements made over the last 100-plus years since John M. Browning first designed the 1911 have made them very reliable guns that U.S. Special Forces, elite Marine units and many law enforcement agencies still prefer over more modern sidearms. As for the Springfield RO Compact, all the stars are aligned to make this an excellent shooting and handing semi-auto.

On the range you immediately begin to find the features that rise to the occasion. Having the bull barrel and full-length guide rod are a plus, and since the takedown procedure is only slightly compromised by the upgrade, it is an absolute advantage. With the Springfield's lightweight speed trigger



The Range Officer Compact has a quick disassembly procedure that utilizes a simple plastic "takedown" piece that fits over the full-length guide rod with the slide locked back. This relieves spring tension and makes it easy to remove the assembly from the slide.

and precise slide-to-frame fit, the skeletonized Delta hammer speeds up movement and improves lock time. Spent shell cases easily clear the lowered and flared ejection port and have less tendency to come back at you. This is particularly important to shooters like myself who are left-eye dominant and right-handed, because our heads are not in the right place, so to speak. Lastly, there is recoil management and sight acquisition. The double recoil spring, bull barrel and full-length guide rod all contribute to less felt recoil and faster sight acquisition between shots. The low-profile, white-dot rear sight has



a nice square channel that aligns quickly with the bright red fiber-optic front sight, and this works well under a great diversity of lighting situations. The trigger pull on my test gun averaged 5.3 pounds, about the same as a striker-fired Glock, with 0.13 inches of travel and a quick reset.

To test the pistol, I chose three tactical loads with varying grain weights. On the light side was Hornady's Critical Defense 185-grain FTX, in the middle was Sig Sauer's new 200-grain Elite Performance JHP, and rounding out the mix was the heavy-hitting Federal Premium 230-grain Hydra-Shok JHP. The Hornady FTX ammo left the RO Compact's 4-inch barrel at 910 fps, the Sig Sauer load registered 850 fps, and the Federal Hydra-Shok clocked 810 fps.

The RO Compact has excellent balance in hand. The recoil was moderate with all three brands of ammu-

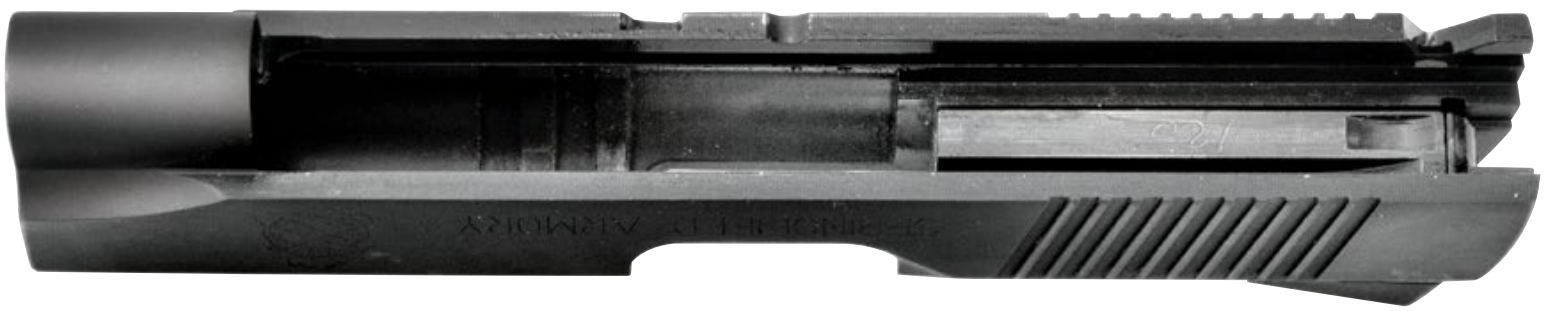
PERFORMANCE

SPRINGFIELD RANGE OFFICER COMPACT .45 ACP

LOAD	VELOCITY	ACCURACY
Federal Premium 230 Hydra-Shok JHP	810	1.75
Hornady 185 Critical Defense FTX	910	1.50
Sig Sauer 200 Elite Performance JHP	850	1.75

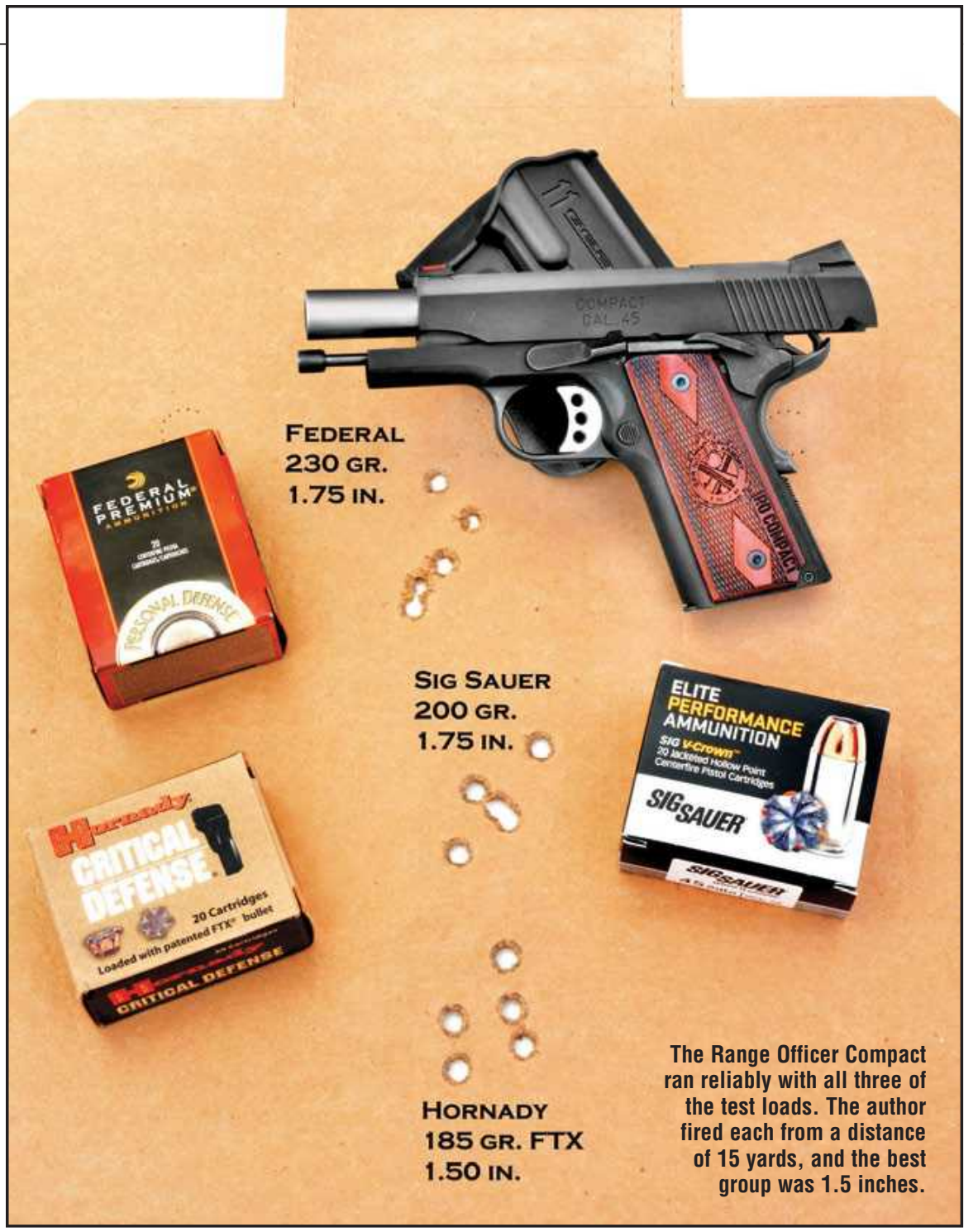
Bullet weight measured in grains, velocity in fps by chronograph and accuracy in inches for best five-shot groups at 15 yards.







The slide stop lever pulls out and goes back in with little effort, so this gun is truly as easy to handle on the workbench as it is on the range. Disassembly only takes about a minute when using the "takedown" piece to quickly remove the dual recoil spring and full-length guide rod.



The Range Officer Compact ran reliably with all three of the test loads. The author fired each from a distance of 15 yards, and the best group was 1.5 inches.



For fast targeting, the Range Officer Compact features a dovetailed front sight blade with a red fiber-optic insert that pairs well with the white-dot rear sight.

nition, and the gun shot just slightly below the point of aim with all of the ammo at 15 yards. Overall, tfiring off-hand using a Weaver stance, the best groups averaged 1.75 inches. The best group measured 1.5 inches with the Federal Premium ammo, and the Sig Sauer and Hornady rounds created similar groups measuring 1.75 inches.

CLOSE-QUARTERS .45

Overall, for a compact 1911, this new version of the Springfield Armory Range Officer delivers the most gun for the money (under $1,000) while providing premium features, such as the bull barrel and full-length guide rod, precise slide-to-frame fit, excellent combat sights, a lightweight trigger, very manageable recoil and the accuracy demanded from a CQB sidearm. For more information, visit springfield-armory.com or call 800-680-6866. **1911**

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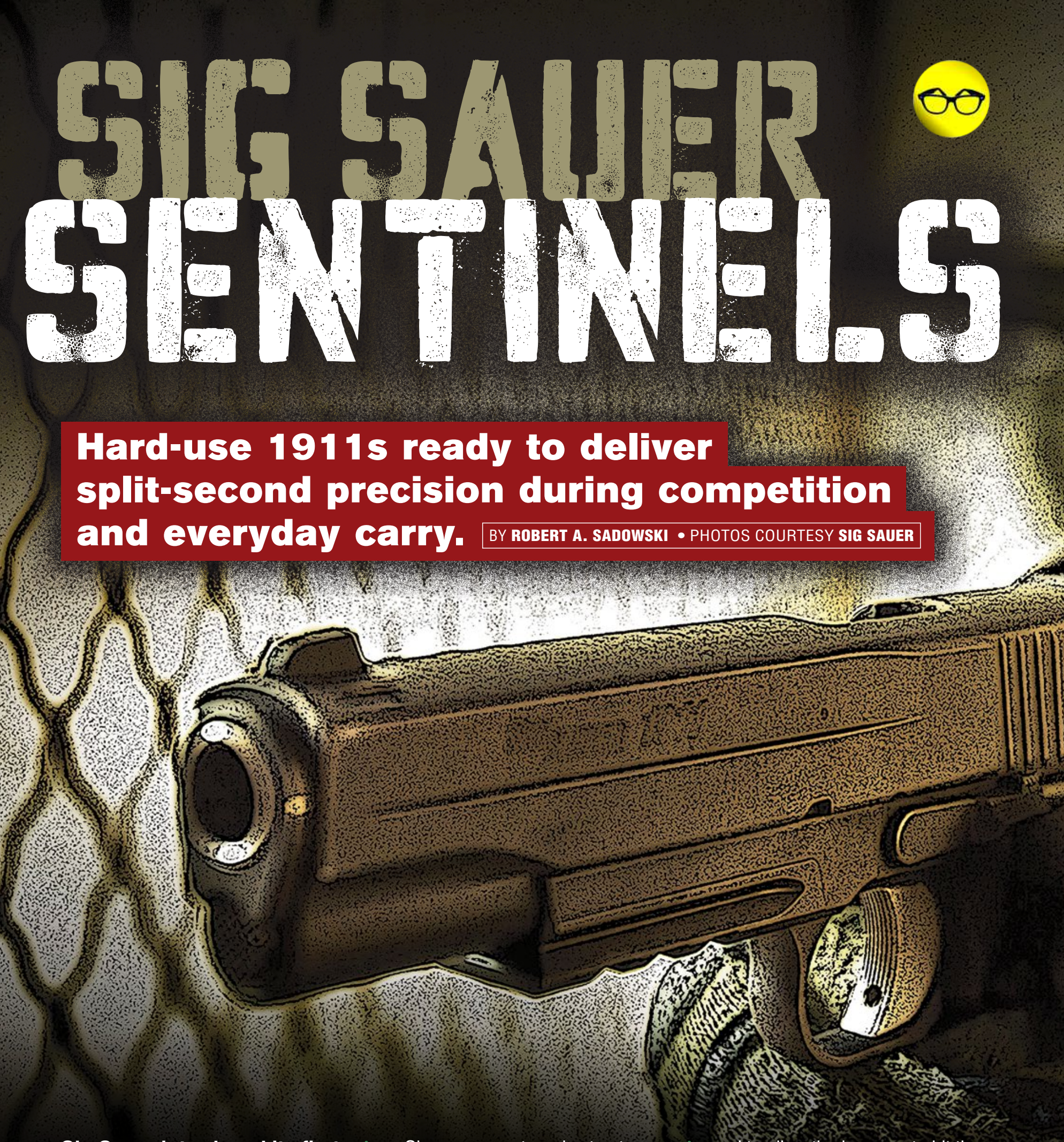
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SIG SAUER SENTINELS

Hard-use 1911s ready to deliver split-second precision during competition and everyday carry.

BY **ROBERT A. SADOWSKI** • PHOTOS COURTESY **SIG SAUER**



Sig Sauer introduced its first 1911, the GSR, in 2004. Not only did Sig incorporate aesthetics with definite Sig heritage—the slide profile, for instance—but it also incorporated design features to enhance the performance of the overall 1911 platform.

Sig uses an external extractor on all of its 1911s, since the standard 1911 extractor is one of the design's weak points and external extractors have proven more reliable. That's why most modern pistols use an external extractor. All Sig 1911s also use a Series 80 mechanism that requires the trigger to be fully pressed rearward to allow the hammer to hit the firing pin. Even Sig Sauer's "stock" 1911s incorporate match-grade barrels and triggers to enhance their performance and accuracy.

Sig Sauer's 1911s have been built in the U.S. since day one. All Sig 1911s, as with almost all of the company's firearms, are made in Newing-

ton, New Hampshire. Last year, Sig Sauer was the second-largest seller of 1911s in the U.S.—only behind Kimber—and they were a close second.

WARHORSE ELITE

Sig Sauer offers 1911s in four model sizes: full-size, carry, compact and ultra-compact. Within these sizes, many options and finishes are offered to meet the end user's needs, including competition shooting, concealed-carry defense or LE duty. The fact is that Sig's other pistols, the traditional double-action/single-action (DA/SA) line of pistols, are popular with U.S. law enforcement and with elite units in the military. Meanwhile, the Sig 1911s have also been embraced by law enforcement. In 2012, the Texas Department of Public Safety's Special Operations Group adopted the Sig TacOps in .45 ACP as the agency's official sidearm. The Special Operations Group is the tactical unit of the agency, which includes the Texas Ranger Special Weapons and Tactics



The lines of a Sig Sauer-produced 1911 are clearly recognizable, from the external extractor to the distinct slide top and sides.

Team, the Texas Ranger Reconnaissance Team and the Special Response Team. The TacOps was chosen because the agency wanted a large-caliber handgun capable of making fast and accurate follow-up shots. After intense endurance and environmental testing, the TacOps pistol was selected. The agency's officers have the option of carrying the TacOps in .45 ACP or their issued Sig Sauer P226 DAK in .357 SIG.

The TacOps is a full-sized pistol that features low-profile night sights, an integral accessory rail, an ambidextrous safety and Ergo XT grip panels. Like all of Sig's full-sized 1911s, it uses a 5-inch barrel, a checkered flat mainspring housing and an eight-round magazine. The TacOps TB features a threaded barrel for use with a sound suppressor.

Sig Sauer's Nickel Rail has a nickel, PVD-coated, stainless steel slide and frame with contrasting black controls and custom brown Vector grips. A stainless steel magazine well, low-profile night sights and an integral Picatinny rail are standard.

The Spartan and Scorpion are popular full-sized models due to their standout finishes and because, at their core, they are reliable Sig-made 1911s. The Scorpion has a Flat Dark Earth Cerakoted frame and slide. It features a lightweight, flat trigger with a 5-pound pull and Hogue's Mag-well Grip Set, which combines G10 grip panels and a mainspring housing in an integrated magazine well extension for rapid magazine changes. A threaded-barrel Scorpion model is also available.

The Emperor Scorpion has a similar magazine well setup, but with a Flat Dark Earth PVD-coated slide and frame, and a skeletonized trigger. The "oil-rubbed bronze" finish of the Spartan and the words "*Molon Labe*" ("come and take them") engraved along its slide and grips make this full-sized 1911 stand out from the pack. Its features include a skeletonized hammer and trigger, low-profile night sights, a steel magazine well and Spartan custom grips. The TacOps and Scorpion are available with the unique Sig slide profile

"The Sig 1911 line of pistols offers operators and users enhanced, high-performance tools."



SPECIFICATIONS:

SIG SAUER 1911 TACOPS

CALIBER: .357 SIG, .45 ACP • **BARREL:** 5 inches • **OA LENGTH:** 8.7 inches
WEIGHT: 41.6 ounces • **GRIPS:** Ergo XT • **SIGHTS:** Low-profile night
ACTION: SA • **FINISH:** Nitron • **CAPACITY:** 8+1 • **MSRP:** $1,213

SIG SAUER 1911 NICKEL RAIL

CALIBER: .45 ACP • **BARREL:** 5 inches • **OA LENGTH:** 8.7 inches
WEIGHT: 41.6 ounces • **GRIPS:** Polymer • **SIGHTS:** Low-profile night
ACTION: SA • **FINISH:** Nitron • **CAPACITY:** 8+1 • **MSRP:** $1,185

SIG SAUER 1911 SCORPION

CALIBER: .45 ACP • **BARREL:** 5 inches • **OA LENGTH:** 8.7 inches
WEIGHT: 41.6 ounces • **GRIPS:** Hogue G10 • **SIGHTS:** Low-profile night
ACTION: SA • **FINISH:** Flat Dark Earth • **CAPACITY:** 8+1 • **MSRP:** $1,213

SIG SAUER 1911 SPARTAN

CALIBER: .45 ACP, 10mm • **BARREL:** 5 inches • **OA LENGTH:** 8.7 inches
WEIGHT: 41.6 ounces • **GRIPS:** Hogue Spartan • **SIGHTS:** Low-profile night
ACTION: SA • **FINISH:** Bronze nitron • **CAPACITY:** 8+1 • **MSRP:** $1,356

SIG SAUER 1911 STX

CALIBER: .45 ACP • **BARREL:** 5 inches • **OA LENGTH:** 8.7 inches
WEIGHT: 41.6 ounces • **GRIPS:** Burled maple • **SIGHTS:** Adjustable combat night
ACTION: SA • **FINISH:** Nitron, stainless • **CAPACITY:** 8+1 • **MSRP:** $1,213

SIG SAUER 1911 NITRON SUPER TARGET

CALIBER: .45 ACP • **BARREL:** 5 inches • **OA LENGTH:** 8.7 inches
WEIGHT: 41.6 ounces • **GRIPS:** Wood • **SIGHTS:** Fiber-optic front, adjustable rear
ACTION: SA • **FINISH:** Nitron • **CAPACITY:** 8+1 • **MSRP:** $1,690

SIG SAUER 1911 MAX

CALIBER: .45 ACP, .40 S&W • **BARREL:** 5 inches • **OA LENGTH:** 8.7 inches
WEIGHT: 41.6 ounces • **GRIPS:** Hogue G10 • **SIGHTS:** Fiber-optic front, adjustable rear
ACTION: SA • **FINISH:** Stainless • **CAPACITY:** 8+1 • **MSRP:** $1,713

SIG SAUER 1911 CARRY NITRON

CALIBER: .45 ACP • **BARREL:** 4.2 inches • **OA LENGTH:** 7.7 inches
WEIGHT: 38.8 ounces • **GRIPS:** Rosewood • **SIGHTS:** Low-profile night
ACTION: SA • **FINISH:** Nitron • **CAPACITY:** 8+1 • **MSRP:** $1,099

SIG SAUER 1911 FASTBACK CARRY NIGHTMARE

CALIBER: .45 ACP, .357 SIG • **BARREL:** 4.2 inches • **OA LENGTH:** 7.7 inches
WEIGHT: 38.8 ounces • **GRIPS:** Hogue G10 • **SIGHTS:** Low-profile night
ACTION: SA • **FINISH:** Nitron • **CAPACITY:** 8+1 (.45), 9+1 (.357) • **MSRP:** $1,242

SIG SAUER 1911 ULTRA NITRON

CALIBER: .45 ACP • **BARREL:** 3.3 inches • **OA LENGTH:** 6.8 inches
WEIGHT: 28 ounces • **GRIPS:** Blackwood • **SIGHTS:** Low-profile night
ACTION: SA • **FINISH:** Nitron • **CAPACITY:** 7+1 • **MSRP:** $1,142



or in a “traditional” configuration, which has the more recognized round-top and flat-sided slide.

CUSTOM GRADE

The refined STX comes out of Sig’s Custom Shop, and it is loaded with features like a Nitron slide and natural stainless frame for a two-tone look that is accented by burled maple wood grips. The cocking serrations are polished, and the slide’s top is milled flat and topped off with adjustable combat night sights. Additional features include a magazine well, 25-lines-per-inch checkering on the frontstrap, 20-line-per-inch checkering on the mainspring housing, and the entire pistol is dehorned for comfortable and snag-free carry.

Specifically designed for target shooters, the Nitron Super Target and the Stainless Super Target are both chambered in .45 ACP, have custom walnut target grips and feature adjustable rear sights along with fiber-optic front sights. The Nitron model has a matte black Nitron finish while the Stainless model wears a natural stainless finish.

The Max is built to speed-shooting champion Max Michel, Jr.’s specifications through a host of custom features, including a flat trigger, a Dawson Ice Magwell, a Koenig Speed Hammer and an EGW sear and firing pin. The sights feature a fiber-optic front and an adjustable rear unit for high-speed visibility. Max’s “MM” logo is engraved on the slide and machined into the Hogue G10 “Chainlink” grips, which offer an aggressive, non-slip surface. The Max is chambered in both .45 ACP and .40 S&W, and it is competition ready right out of the box.

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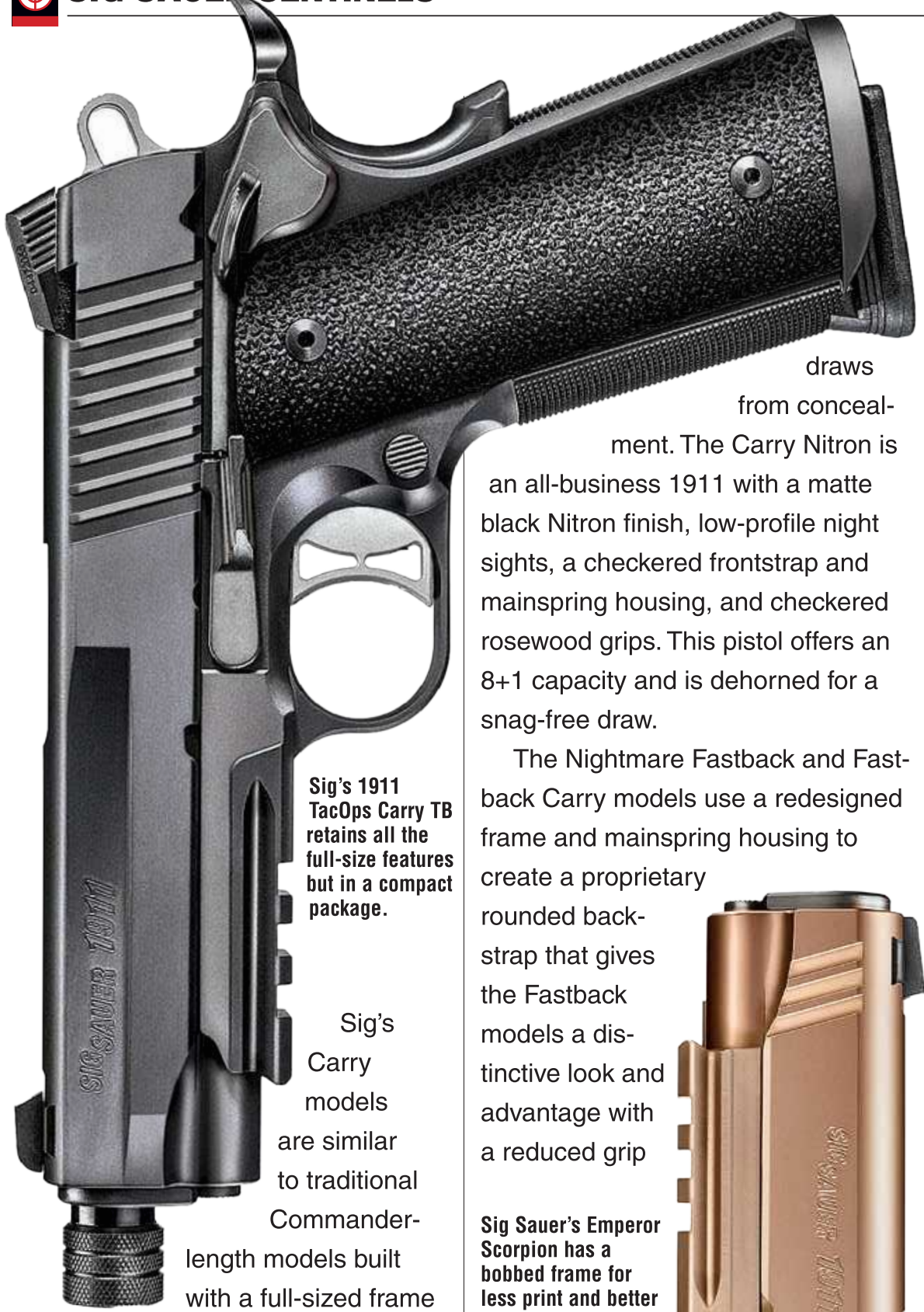
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SIG SAUER SENTINELS



Sig's 1911 TacOps Carry TB retains all the full-size features but in a compact package.

Sig's Carry models are similar to traditional Commander-length models built with a full-sized frame and topped off with a 4.2-inch barrel. They are designed for concealed carry yet have the eight-round capacity and grip area of a full-sized pistol. The Scorpion, Spartan, TacOps and Nickel are all available in carry models. Along with the shorter barrel for better concealment, these carry models are also dehorned for a snag-free outer surface that enhances draws from concealment. The Carry Nitron is an all-business 1911 with a matte black Nitron finish, low-profile night sights, a checkered frontstrap and mainspring housing, and checkered rosewood grips. This pistol offers an 8+1 capacity and is dehorned for a snag-free draw.

The Nightmare Fastback and Fastback Carry models use a redesigned frame and mainspring housing to create a proprietary rounded backstrap that gives the Fastback models a distinctive look and advantage with a reduced grip

Sig Sauer's Emperor Scorpion has a bobbed frame for less print and better concealment.



signature for better concealed carry. These pistols still provide the same feel and control of full-size models. The Fastback Nightmare features stainless controls, grip screws and a barrel bushing that contrasts with the rest of the pistol's matte black Nitron finish. Additional features include Hogue G10 grips, low-profile night sights, a skeletonized hammer and a trigger with an overtravel-adjustment screw. It is available in 9mm, .45 ACP, .357 SIG and .40 S&W.

The Fastback comes with a Nitron-finished stainless steel slide and frame offset with Hogue's double-diamond rosewood grips. The Fastback Emperor Scorpion is the same as its full-sized brother but with the stainless steel Fastback frame and the traditional round-top slide.

For more deep-cover carry, the Sig Ultra models feature a shortened frame and a 3.3-inch barrel. The Ultra Nitron model offers a 7+1 capacity in .45 ACP with a lightweight alloy frame and a black stainless steel side. The checkered blackwood grips offer good texture for a firm hold, and the low-profile night sights make target acquisition fast. The Ultra Two-Tone features the same lightweight black alloy frame but with a natural stainless steel finished slide and double-diamond checkered rosewood grips. It is chambered in either 9mm for an 8+1 capacity or .45 ACP with a 7+1 capacity. The C3 is a hybrid compact with a 7+1 capacity in .45 ACP that weighs just under 30 ounces unloaded. It is built with a 4.2-inch barrel and a shortened frame and features checkered rosewood grips and a two-tone finish.

"Sig Sauer's 1911s have been built in the U.S. since day one."

The Sig 1911 line of pistols offers operators and users enhanced, high-performance tools. Its roots may be in the 20th century, but it is ready for real-world, 21st century work. For more information, visit sigsauer.com or call 603-610-3000.



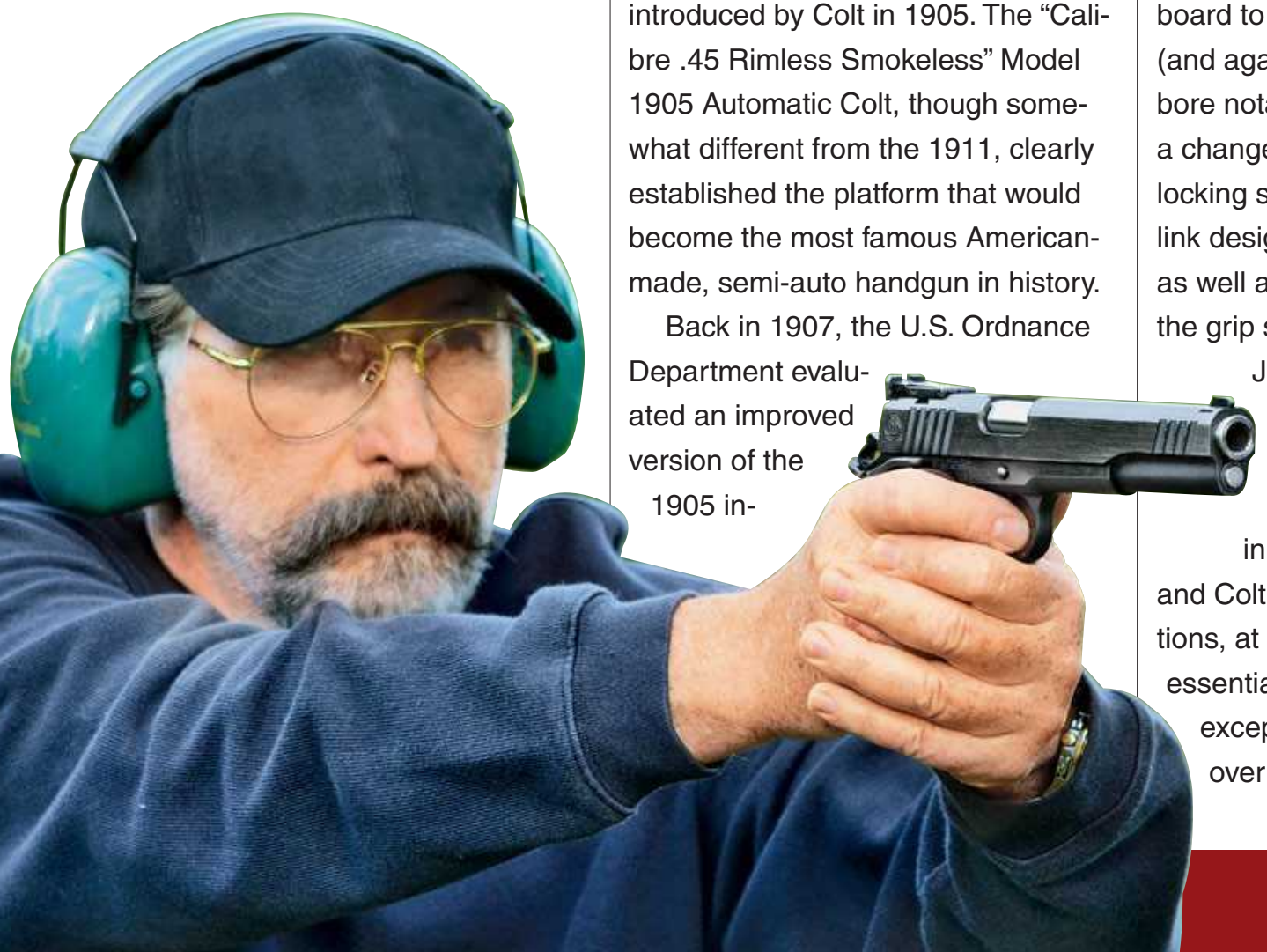
THE MAC 1911



BY **DENNIS ADLER**

Metro Arms' affordable, match-ready, long-slide .45 ACP.

The Model 1911 was never meant to be a target pistol. Not that it can't be, it just wasn't designed that way.



Jointly developed by John M. Browning and Colt's Patent Firearms Manufacturing Company, the earliest semi-automatic .45 ACP pistols were introduced by Colt in 1905. The "Calibre .45 Rimless Smokeless" Model 1905 Automatic Colt, though somewhat different from the 1911, clearly established the platform that would become the most famous American-made, semi-auto handgun in history.

Back in 1907, the U.S. Ordnance Department evaluated an improved version of the 1905 intended for the U.S. military, but the gun failed to meet the government's expectations, sending Colt and Browning back to the drawing board to rework the design in 1909 (and again in 1910). These versions bore notable improvements, such as a change from a double-link barrel locking system to the single toggle-link design that is still used today, as well as a dramatic alteration to the grip shape and angle, which John Browning stated would improve the gun's handling characteristics. After another government field trial in February 1910, Browning and Colt made additional modifications, at which point the gun looked essentially like the M1911 with the exception of a thumb safety. A little over a year later, on March 3,



1911, the final version of the Browning semi-auto was reevaluated by the Ordnance Department. The new .45 ACP performed flawlessly, firing 6,000 rounds of ammunition without failure and addressing all Ordnance Department concerns, including the addition of an external thumb safety so the gun could be carried with a round chambered and the hammer cocked! On March 29, 1911, U.S. Secretary of War Jacob M. Dickinson approved the selection of the Colt as the "U.S. Pistol, Automatic, Calibre .45, Model 1911." As they say, the rest is history.

As a military sidearm, the M1911 was exactly what the U.S. needed. But for the civilian market, it left a lot to be desired. After the M1911 was updated to the M1911A1 version in 1924 (distinguished by a shorter trigger, a larger grip safety and an arched mainspring housing), Colt developed its first target model, the National Match pistol, introduced in 1933. Designed specifically for target shooting, it came equipped with a "Super-smooth, hand-honed target action—selected 'Match' barrel—and two-way adjustable rear sight." Original National Match pistols were manufactured up to the beginning of WWII and reprised in 1957 as the Gold Cup National Match.

Fast-forward half a century and the Colt Model 1911 is now the most copied semi-auto in the world. The M1911 has more customized versions for defensive use, target and competitive shooting available than any other handgun in

The MAC 1911 Bullseye is a .45 ACP target pistol ready for competition right out of the box with a 6-inch bull barrel and an extended slide. It uses a steel, full-length guide rod.

FAR LEFT: The aptly named Bullseye's long-slide configuration gives it plenty of fast-point heft.

history, which leads us to the all-new, 6-inch-barreled MAC 1911 Bullseye target pistol from Metro Arms.

MAXED OUT

I can remember purchasing my first long-slide 1911 back in 1988 (which is easy since I still have it), and the first thing I did was have the gun fitted with a target trigger as well as extended grip and thumb safeties. I also had the barrel ramped and throated and added adjustable target sights. At the time, this was a pretty hefty investment in a 1911 that wasn't manufactured by Colt. I ended up with a customized long-slide 1911 that has been dependable, accurate and lost none of its appeal over the last 25 years. Imagine my surprise when I received the new Metro Arms MAC 1911 Bullseye and found pretty much the same gun, right out of the box, as I had custom built a quarter of a century ago.

Manufactured in the Philippines by Metro Arms, the new MAC 1911 Bullseye is a refined, long-barrel version of the company's popular MAC 1911 Classic target model, a finely tuned semi-auto with a wealth of features. While the Bullseye is shorter than a traditional Long Slide (which has a 7-inch barrel), the MAC 1911 adds an inch to the Government model's 5-inch barrel and slide to make this an ideal target pistol.

The differences between a sidearm and a target pistol come down to specific refinements in operating features, ease of use, speed in reloading, barrel construction and, of course, accuracy. Each feature adds to the price. A Government Model that has been custom built will generally set one back anywhere from $2,300 for a Kimber Gold Combat II, to $2,800 for a Les Baer Ultimate Master Combat, and up to $5,000 for a handcrafted competition model from Wilson Combat. Under $2,000, there aren't a lot of target pistols (outside of Springfield Armory's Trophy Match edition), so when the fully optioned MAC 1911 Bullseye 6-inch comes in at a suggested retail price of $1,204, you have to take notice.

For little more than the price of a basic upgraded 1911, the standard Metro Arms Bullseye gives you an extra-long, ramped, match-grade bull barrel; a 4140 hammer-forged steel slide; a fully adjustable BoMar-style rear sight; a dovetailed front sight with a bullseye center; a flared and lowered ejection port; an extended beavertail grip safety; a skeletonized target trigger and combat hammer; wide front and rear slide serrations; a finely checkered frontstrap and flat mainspring housing; an ambidextrous



Standard features for the MAC 1911 Bullseye include checkered frontstrap serrations, custom hardwood grips and a wide magazine well for loading its eight-round mags.

SPECIFICATIONS

METRO ARMS MAC 1911 BULLSEYE

CALIBER	.45 ACP
BARREL	6 inches
OA LENGTH	9.88 inches
WEIGHT	46.9 ounces
GRIPS	Checkered hardwood
SIGHTS	Dovetailed front, BoMar-style adjustable rear
ACTION	SA
FINISH	Blued
CAPACITY	8+1
MSRP	$1,219



The skeletonized target trigger is thermo-molded with nine lines of full-width, deep checkering and has an overtravel adjustment screw. The raised, checkered magazine release is easy to activate.

thumb safety; a widened magazine well; and an eight-round magazine. For the most part, that is the list of features considered requisite upgrades for a competition-level .45 ACP target pistol, so you have to ask the obvious questions. How well does Metro Arms build its 1911s? Do they have the quality of fit and finish you expect from a match-grade target pistol? And, most importantly, how do they shoot? Although the standard features of the MAC 1911 Bullseye imply high expectations that the price does not support, it all shakes out on the test range.

HITTING BULLSEYES

The MAC 1911 Bullseye has a combination matte/polished extended frame and slide, with the flat surfaces polished bright. The top of the slide is beveled and finished in a smooth matte blue/black, which corresponds to the underside of the frame, the inside flats of the slide serrations, the front and backstrap panels, the magazine well bevel, thumb safety, slide release and beavertail safety. The custom hardwood grips have a deep textured, fish-scale design with a full border outline and the Metro Arms logo in the center. Visually, it is a handsomely finished firearm.

The trigger pull on my test gun averaged a light 4.8 pounds. The skeletonized trigger is metal-injection-molded and has molded-in fine checkering across its face. The adjustable trigger has only 0.125 inches of travel to drop the hammer and a negligible 0.062 inches of overtravel. The slide release is light and easily activated (even when not chambering a round). The ambidextrous thumb safety clicks up and down with authority, and the hammer cocks with modest effort. The slide demands a solid, but not excessive, pull when clearing the gun or chambering the first round. It is, however, a very quick, solid pull to the rear, making it feel somewhat different from a traditional Government Model slide due to the elongated recoil spring. In addition, the extra inch of

PERFORMANCE

MAC 1911 BULLSEYE .45 ACP

LOAD	VELOCITY	ACCURACY
CCI/Speer Blazer Brass 230 FMJ	850	2.00
Federal Premium 230 Hydra-Shok	873	1.95
Hornady FTX Critical Defense 185	1,030	1.75
Speer 185 Gold Dot HP	1,030	0.85

Bullet weight measured in grains, velocity in fps and accuracy in inches for best five-shot groups at 25 yards.



The elongated slide houses a full-length guide rod and a 6-inch, ramped, match-grade bull barrel.

FAR LEFT: Note the enlarged, ambidextrous thumb safety, the lowerd and flared ejection port, and the BoMar-style rear sight, which is adjustable for windage and elevation.

barrel and slide length increases the sight radius and makes the gun just a tad nose heavy, which is an advantage for a target pistol.

Since the Bullseye's match-grade bull barrel is ramped for loading hardball ammunition, my test cartridges consisted of 230-grain FMJs plus three popular defensive rounds. On the high end of the defensive scale was 230-grain Federal Premium Hydra-Shok jacketed hollow points (JHPs), followed by 185-grain Hornady FTX Critical Defense and Speer Gold Dot HP rounds. The Bullseye will handle each one but can experience feeding issues with some defensive loads (Metro Arms offers a recoil spring change to correct this problem). This, however, was not an issue with the Hydra-Shoks, but there were a few hang-ups with the lighter 185-grainers.



The Bullseye is a bit more complex than a Government Model 1911, as it incorporates a two-piece, threaded guide rod that has to be unscrewed before the gun is field-stripped. The pistol's full-length guide rod and recoil spring must also be secured in a reverse plug.



Metro Arms equips the MAC 1911 Bullseye with several custom-grade features today's shooters require, including an extended beavertail and a Commander-style hammer.

The hardball .45 ACP passed through my chronograph's traps at 850 fps, the heavyweight Federal Hydra-Shok slightly faster at 873 fps, while the Hornady and Speer both flew at 1,030 fps. All tests were done using a two-handed hold from a rested position at 25 yards (75 feet), shooting at IPSC targets suspended from a Law Enforcement Targets' Range-Pro target stand. The best five-round group with 230-grain hardball ammo measured an even 2 inches clustered around the "A" of the IPSC target. Of the defensive ammunition, Federal's 230-grain JHPs functioned best in the MAC 1911 but had the widest group, measuring 1.95 inches. Speer's 185-grain rounds produced the tightest group, measuring 0.85 inches, with five Hornady 185-grain FTX rounds clustering into 1.75 inches, but there were occasional feeding issues with both in the MAC 1911. For target shooting, 230-grain hardball is the best (and most affordable) choice.

Aside from the occasional failure to feed with 185-grain defensive ammo, the MAC 1911 functioned flawlessly, was quick to reload, and, with the BoMar-style adjustable rear sight and crisp trigger pull, proved



At the range, the Bullseye performed well off-hand, printing tight groups at 25 yards.

more than adequate in the task of printing tight groups, firing off-hand at 25 yards with open sights.

BUILT STRONG

The MAC 1911 Bullseye checks out as a quality-built firearm, but not everything is perfect about the design. Having a 6-inch barrel, an elongated recoil spring and a two-piece guide rod presents some interesting challenges when field-stripping the gun, and the takedown and reassembly steps (one does not simply reverse the order) must be strictly adhered to. It is a longer field-stripping process than a traditional 1911, but, then again, this is not a traditional 1911. As a dedicated target pistol, the MAC performs well, and, with practice and hand-loaded ammunition, would easily be capable of printing groups under 1 inch at 25 yards.

Overall, for an entry-level competition gun, the MAC 1911 Bullseye seems to be worth the asking price. It is also available with a deluxe hard-chromed finish and a red fiber-optic front sight. For more information, visit metroarms.com or call 732-493-0333. **1911**

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TAC ULTRA



Rock Island Armory's hard-charging 10mm tames the range with big-bore power and supreme accuracy!

BY **ROBERT A. SADOWSKI**



CHAMBER THE 1911 IN 10MM AND IT CAN PERFORM.

The classic platform was designed for the .45 ACP, made to take about 21,000 psi with 230-grain ball ammunition. In the late 1920s, the gun was juiced up with the .38 Super, which has about 36,000 psi, depending on the load. Introduce the 1911 to the 10mm and you are talking about maximum pressure in the range of 37,500 psi. That's enough to rattle the old pistol design, but not so with the Rock Island Armory TAC Ultra.

Call me slightly prejudiced, but with every new 1911 I handle, one of the initial tests I perform is what I call the "rattle test." I shake the pistol and listen for any loose-fitting parts. The TAC Ultra was dead silent. When I looked for any play between the slide and frame, there was nothing but a tight fit. The TAC Ultra is manufactured in Marikina City in the Philippines by Armscor. The 1911s from Armscor include value-priced GI 1911-style pistols. The TAC Series line raises the bar. The TAC Ultra in particular is equipped with all the features we come to expect in a 1911—an extended beavertail, an ambidextrous thumb safety and a magazine well funnel, to name a few.

The TAC Ultra uses a Series 70 system, so there is no internal firing pin safety like in the Series 80. Most 1911 purists, myself included, prefer the Series 70. The trigger feels cleaner and crisper than a system that uses the trigger to control the safety device like in the Series 80. The slide and slide stop are forged.

The TAC Ultra uses a one-piece guide rod and bull barrel design that dispenses with the traditional barrel bushing. This setup enhances the accuracy of the pistol, and it also makes for a slightly different field-stripping



Rock Island Armory's heavy-hitting TAC Ultra is a tricked-out 10mm 1911 that costs a fraction of a similarly equipped custom gun.

procedure. When the pistol is in battery, the flared bull barrel locks up at the muzzle with a tight fit in the slide, and rear locking lugs lock into the inside of the slide like a typical 1911, making the pistol bank-vault tight. The barrel is stainless steel and has a built-in feed ramp like a Clark Custom barrel. The integral ramp fully supports the case so rounds feed directly onto the ramp; there is no gap between the frame and barrel for bullet noses to snag on.

The slide sports a subtle Armscor logo aft of the angled rear serrations; there are angled serrations at the muzzle end of the slide, too. The top of the slide is rounded like GI-style pistols. The front sight is dovetailed in place, and it has a tiny reddish orange fiber-optic tube that sucks up available light. In dim to dark conditions, the front sight is more difficult to see, but that is the nature of fiber-optic front sights. The adjustable rear sight is dovetailed into the slide and is radically dehorned. There's not even a hint of a sharp edge on the rear sight, which features two white dots and a squared notch. The rear sight is flush with the rear of the slide for a maximized sight radius. A small flat-blade screwdriver and a sense of direction is needed to adjust the sights. There are no arrows to indicate sight adjustment direction, but for windage there are indicator marks that show left/right movement of the sight. The clicks were precise and gave confidence in the adjustments. In use, the sights are very good. They did not lose their zero even with the constant hammering of the 10mm loads.



A paper clip is required to field-strip the TAC Ultra pistol due to its one-piece guide rod and bushing-less bull barrel configuration.

The frame has a full dust cover that allows for the attachment of a laser or light via a Picatinny-style rail. The railed portion of the receiver is beefed up, and the extra weight helps tame some of the 10mm's recoil. Serrations on the frontstrap and a checkered polymer mainspring housing aid in gripping and controlling this beast. The upswept beavertail allows a higher grip on the pistol with no fear of hammer bite. The speed bump is also sized so that, even with a less-than-perfect grip, the grip safety will be disengaged. The skeletonized hammer offers plenty of grip to cock and decock the hammer, and the extended, ambidextrous thumb safety worked precisely with good positive clicks when flipped with your thumb. The trigger is also skeletonized and has long vertical serrations so your finger stays placed on the trigger. It is adjustable for overtravel via a small hex screw in the face of the trigger. The

SPECIFICATIONS

ROCK ISLAND ARMORY TAC ULTRA

CALIBER	10mm
BARREL	5 inches
OA LENGTH	8.75 inches
WEIGHT	39.84 ounces (empty)
GRIPS	G10
SIGHTS	Fiber-optic front, BoMar-style adjustable rear
ACTION	SA
FINISH	Parkerized
CAPACITY	8+1
MSRP	$694

trigger had a slight bit of take-up and just a bit of creep before it broke. The trigger was good. It broke on average at 4.8 pounds.

The Operator II grip panels have an aggressive golf-ball pattern near their outer forward edges, near the frontstrap, and deep diagonal cuts toward the rear. A thumb recess allows easy and quick access to the magazine release for high-speed magazine reloads. At first glance, I thought the grips would be too aggressive for a 10mm, but they were

“When I walked out to the target, I was smitten. The TAC Ultra clustered a magazine’s worth of bullets into an impressive group.”

not. Even after extended shooting, my palms were no worse for wear. The TAC Ultra also sports a magazine funnel that snaps onto the butt of the frame and is held down by the grip panel screws. The funnel—which requires basepads to be installed on the magazines so you can slam them home with the palm of your hand—sped up my reloads.

Two eight-round magazines are supplied with the pistol; both feature metal bodies and followers. I didn’t bust my thumbs loading these magazines, and both magazines came with rubber basepads installed. When seated, about 0.13 inches of the basepad extend below the mag well. I like the almost-flush fit





of the setup. The Parkerized finish over the entire pistol was well executed and understated.

RANGE TIME

Three brands of ammunition were used for range work: two training loads and a defense load. The training loads consisted of Federal's American Eagle 180-grain FMJs and PMC Bronze 200-grain FMJ-TCs. I also used Federal's Personal Defense rounds loaded with 180-grain Hydra-Shok JHPs. All of the ammunition cycled flawlessly through the TAC Ultra. For accuracy testing I placed a target at 25 yards and used my range bag as a rest. The TAC Ultra preferred the American Eagle load over the PMC, hands down. Always test a variety of ammunition in your weapon; you never know what brand or bullet weight it will perform better with, so do your due diligence. I know, I'm preaching to the choir.

PERFORMANCE

ROCK ISLAND ARMORY TAC ULTRA 10MM

LOAD	VELOCITY	ACCURACY
Federal American Eagle 180 FMJ	1,058	1.12
Federal Premium 180 Hydra-Shok JHP	1,012	0.57
PMC Bronze 200 FMJ-TC	1,023	2.27

Bullet weight measured in grains, velocity in feet per second by chronograph and accuracy in inches for best five-shot groups at 25 yards.



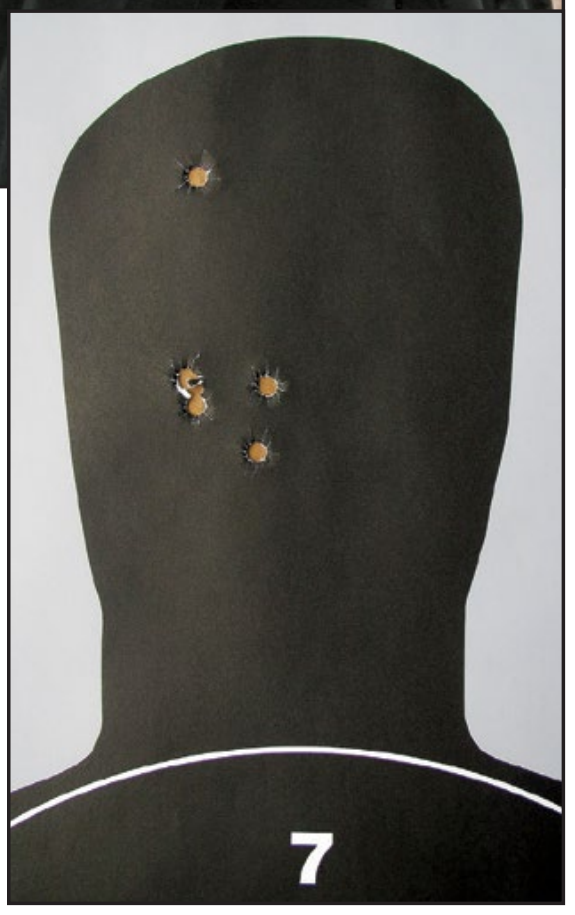


When I fired the Federal cartridges, I had to lift my head and stare at the target. The shots felt good but I couldn't see where they were hitting. When I walked out to the target, I was smitten. The TAC Ultra clustered a magazine's worth of bullets into an impressive group. Six of the eight holes were touching; five created one large hole. "How much does this pistol cost?" I asked myself. Recoil with the TAC Ultra was very controllable. I think the extended dust cover helped to reduce muzzle flip and keep me on target. In rapid fire, the pistol cycled quickly, as you would expect



Similar to those from Clark Custom, the TAC Ultra's stainless steel barrel has a built-in feed ramp. This integral ramp fully supports the case so rounds feed directly onto the ramp and into the chamber.

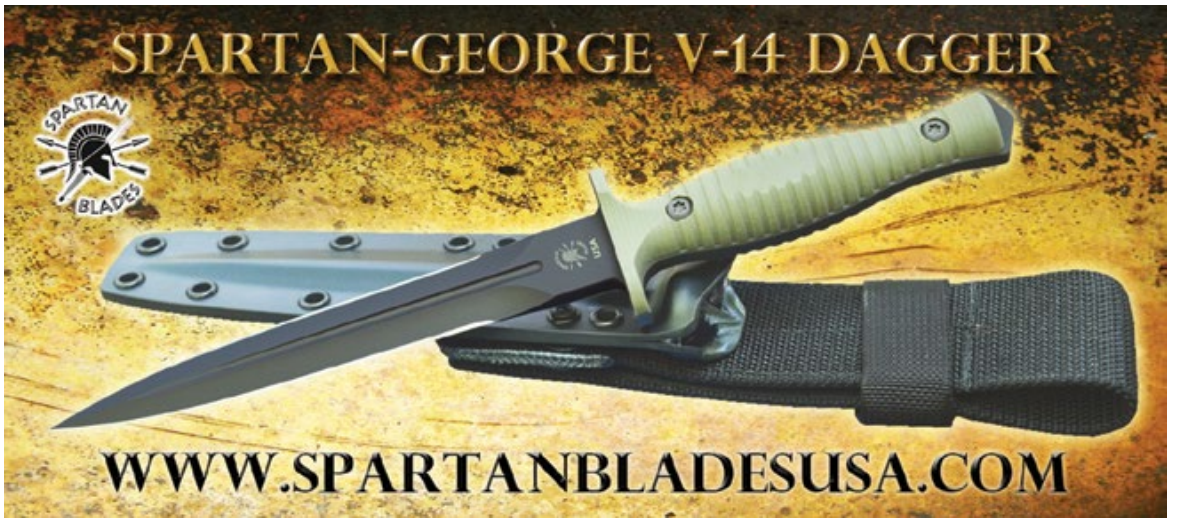




The author created this six-shot group by firing the TAC Ultra rapidly at 15 yards. The larger hole on the left is where three rounds hit the target.

with a round hot round like the 10mm. I needed hiking boots to retrieve the empty cases ejected from the pistol.

I am not sure what the long-term effects of 10mm shooting will be on the Rock Island Armory TAC Ultra, but I am curious. Maybe I'll need to keep it and find out. For more information, visit us.armscor.com or call 775-537-1444. **1911**





TAYLOR'S TACTICAL

If it seems like there are more 1911s on the market today than ever before, that's because there are.

The fundamental design, pioneered by John Moses Browning and Colt, and finalized in 1911 as the "U.S. Pistol, Automatic, Calibre .45, M1911," has endured for more than a century. It has been improved, modernized, retro-styled, lengthened, shortened and modified in every conceivable fashion, and for modern tactical use it has been redone by everyone from Colt (with the Close Quarters Battle Pistol) to the Philippines-based manufacturer Armscor.

One of largest manufacturers of 1911s in the world, with over 30 different models covering virtually every variation of the design, including Government and compact models, Armscor's latest tactical versions with durable Cerakote finishes are offered by Taylor's & Company. Armscor can truly build a quality 1911 and tailor its features to the specific requirements of its retailers, which means you get what you pay for. Its top-end models are built to perform muzzle to muzzle with more expensive 1911 models on the market.

TACTICAL 1911s

The Taylor's Tactical line of Armscor-made 1911 models features the 1911-A1 Full Size Tactical, with a 5-inch barrel, and the recently added

DUO ★★★★

Taylor's & Co. unleashes Full Size and Compact Carry .45s primed for defense!

BY **DENNIS ADLER** • PHOTOS BY **STEVE WOODS**

Taylor's Tactical 1911s, including the Full Size (top) and Compact Carry (bottom), feature tank-tough Cerakote finishes and plenty of custom-grade enhancements to suit any task. The Full Size is shown with a Viridian X5L light/laser.

TAYLOR'S TACTICAL DUO









The author tested the 1.18-inch-wide Full Size and Compact Carry 1911s from Taylor's, which came with Dark Earth and Gun Metal Grey Cerakote finishes, respectively. Both feature fiber-optic front sights, Novak-style adjustable rear sights, durable G10 grips, skeletonized hammers and triggers, and extended beavertail grip safeties—features many shooters prefer today.

Taylor's Tactical 1911 Compact Carry, with a 3.6-inch, tapered bull barrel. Taylor's has more than a dozen different 1911 models, from early-style GI versions to deluxe, hand-engraved presentation models. The Taylor's Full Size comes with two Italian-made, eight-round magazines with extended basepads and anti-tilt followers. The Compact Carry comes with two 7-round magazines. The Full Size model shown is finished in Dark Earth Cerakote and the Compact Carry (without a dust cover rail) in Gun Metal Grey Cerakote, both of which are custom finishes offered by Taylor's & Co. The 1911s are also available in coyote tan, OD green and nitride black with matching or contrasting G10 grips.

The overall length for the Compact Carry is 8.38 inches. It has a height of 5.25 inches, a width 1.18 inches including the grip panels and an unloaded weight of 38.8 ounces. The Full Size tips the scales at an even 52 ounces, with an overall length of 8.75 inches, a height of 5.5 inches with the extended magazine basepads and an overall width of 1.18 inches. The MSRPs are $799 and $814 for the Cerakoted Full Size and Compact Carry models, respectively. The standard 1911-A1 Full Size with a Parkerized finish starts at just $570.

Based on Colt Series 70 designs, each Taylor 1911 is built to the company's exact specifications and exhibits a fine fit, finish and sturdy build quality. The guns have exceptionally close tolerances between the outer dimension of the slide and inner dimension of the frame rails for a solid fit that goes beyond the price point. Shake a Taylor's 1911 and there isn't a sound. You can't say that

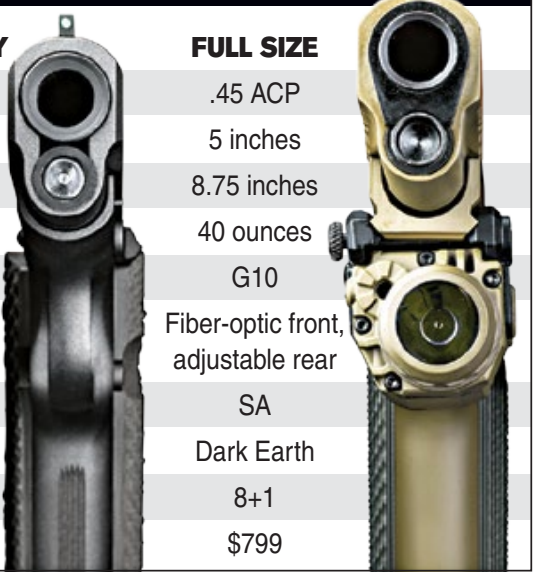
for every 1911 on the market today. The Tactical models also come with heavy-duty recoil springs and full-length guide rods, two features that are generally add-on options on 1911s. Although the recoil spring makes chambering the first round, clearing the action and field-stripping the guns more demanding, the extra effort is well rewarded through less felt recoil and improved handling for higher-velocity defensive rounds.

The Compact Carry's slide has nine deeply cut rear slide serrations; the Full Size has 10 at the front of the slide for a solid grasp when chambering the first round or clearing the gun. Some question the advantages of front slide serrations, but if you need to push the slide back just enough to check the chamber, they quickly earn their keep, especially with Taylor's recoil spring.

SPECIFICATIONS

TAYLOR'S TACTICAL 1911

	COMPACT CARRY	FULL SIZE
CALIBER	.45 ACP	.45 ACP
BARREL	3.6 inches	5 inches
OA LENGTH	8.38 inches	8.75 inches
WEIGHT	38.8 ounces	40 ounces
GRIPS	G10	G10
SIGHTS	Fiber-optic front, adjustable rear	Fiber-optic front, adjustable rear
ACTION	SA	SA
FINISH	Gun Metal Gray	Dark Earth
CAPACITY	7+1	8+1
MSRP	$814	$799



The dovetailed Novak-style rear sights are adjustable for windage and elevation, and the front is an interchangeable, dovetailed, green, fiber-optic blade. The rear sights have rounded edges to prevent them from snagging on clothing, but those rounded edges also save hands and tactical gloves from the minor cuts occasionally received from straight-edged adjustable rear sights. The slide releases are deeply checkered for a solid purchase when dropping the slide on the reload (even



The Compact Carry features a skeletonized, grooved trigger (right) as well as a 3.6-inch tapered bull barrel, a full-length guide rod and a heavy-duty recoil spring (below). Also note the pistol's green fiber-optic front sight, rear slide serrations and left-side-mounted, 1911A1 GI-style thumb safety.

with tactical gloves); the Compact Carry has a single 1911A1-style thumb safety, while the Full Size sports an elongated, ambidextrous thumb safety. Both models have six vertical grooves in the frontstrap. The Compact Carry has eight vertical grooves on the flat mainspring housing, and the Full Size has 20-lpi checkering. Both models feature extended beavertail grip safeties, skeletonized/grooved triggers and Commander-style hammers. Overall, these two specialized Taylor's Tactical models have the majority of the upgrades found on 1911s costing well over $1,000.

PERFORMANCE

TAYLOR'S TACTICAL 1911 .45 ACP

	COMPACT CARRY		FULL SIZE	
LOAD	VELOCITY	ACCURACY	VELOCITY	ACCURACY
Barnes TAC-XPD 185 +P	878	4.50	936	4.00
HPR 185 JHP	886	2.50	983	2.75
Sig Sauer Elite Performance 200 JHP	876	2.75	948	1.93

Bullet weight measured in grains, velocity in fps by chronograph and accuracy in inches for best five-shot groups at 15 yards (Compact Carry) and 25 yards (Full Size).

RANGE EVALUATION

For the range test, I holstered the Compact Carry in the latest Galco Combat Master belt rig. One of the most established CCW holster designs in the world, the Combat Master features double-stitched pancake construction for durability and a pouch contoured to the gun's profile to provide solid retention. Although offering Level 0 retention (Level 1 would be a thumb-break safety strap), this is one of my personal favorites for 1911 concealed-carry use, as it gives the gun excellent cover and the closely contoured fit around the pistol keeps it securely in place until drawn. The Taylor's Compact Carry was a perfect fit.

While familiarizing myself with the guns before the range test, I found the checkered magazine releases very easy to operate, as were the slide releases, even without a loaded magazine. The elongated, ambidextrous safety on the Full Size was very easy to operate; it locked/unlocked with a firm click. This also applied to the single, GI-style thumb safety on







Taylor's Full Size 1911 features an adjustable Novak-style rear sight, forward slide serrations, an extended, ambidextrous thumb safety and a Picatinny rail.

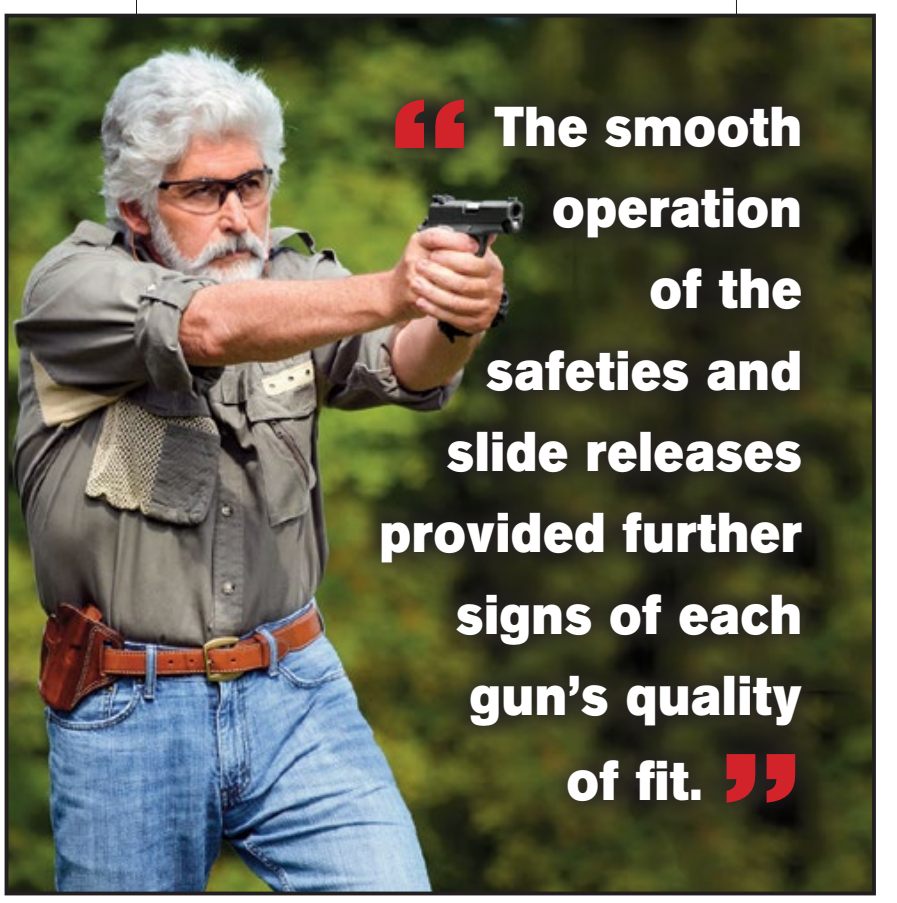


Taylor's Tactical 1911s come with matching or contrasting G10 grips that are textured for a secure grip in extreme conditions.

the Compact Carry. The smooth operation of the safeties and slide releases provided further signs of each gun's quality of fit. The G10 grips and grip strap serrations provided a solid, tactile surface for bare hands and tactical gloves. Overall, these are two 1911s that look and feel like custom-built guns.

I chose three .45 ACP loads to test the 1911s: HPR's 185-grain jacketed hollow points (JHPs), Barnes' TAC-XPD 185-grain +P rounds and Sig Sauer's 200-grain Elite Performance V-Crown JHPs. As previously noted, the guns have very tight frame-to-slide fits that, when combined with their heavy recoil springs, can cause issues with lighter-recoiling ammunition, as I discovered while firing the new Barnes TAC-XPD 185-grain +P, which is specifically engineered to reduce felt recoil. It does, and noticeably so, but unfortunately the Taylor's Full Size experienced a trio of stovepipes as the Barnes occasionally failed to drive the slide fully to the rear. The Full Size functioned smoothly with Sig Sauer and HPR ammo. The Compact Carry also experienced a single stovepipe with the Barnes load. Any failure to feed is important to note in a gun test, but this was truly a peculiarity with the lighter-recoiling ammunition, one of the random characteristics of guns with heavy-duty recoil springs. Regular use would most likely lessen the occurrence, but the Taylor's Tactical 1911s like full-bore loads.

Looking downrange, the Novak-style, white-dot rear sights and green fiber-optic front sights were very easy to acquire; they were similarly easy to reacquire when firing the heavier-recoiling Sig Sauer 200-grain JHP rounds. The trigger pulls were excellent on both guns, with each providing a very quick reset. The skeletonized trigger averaged a smooth 4.16 pounds for the Compact Carry and 4.14 pounds on the Full Size, with a short 0.13-inch take-up and a crisp break. The tactile surfaces of the G10 grip panels provided a solid meld of hand to gun, and the magazine and slide releases functioned flawlessly throughout the range tests. There is nothing here not to like.



Firing off-hand using a two-handed hold and a Weaver stance, I shot five-round strings at regulation Law Enforcement Targets B-27 cardboard silhouettes. HRP's 185-grain JHP rounds clocked an average of 983 fps from the Full Size and 886 fps from the Compact Carry. With Barnes' TAC-XPD 185-grain +P ammo, the Full Size reached 936 fps and the Compact Carry 878 fps. Sig Sauer's 200-grain V-Crown JHPs produced 948 fps and 876 fps, respectively.

From a distance of 25 yards, the 5-inch-barreled Full Size averaged 2.75 inches with the HPR load, 4 inches with the Barnes ammo and an impressive 1.93 inches with Sig Sauer Elite Performance. At 15 yards, the Compact Carry, with its 3.6-inch tapered bull barrel, clustered five Sig V-Crown JHPs into 2.75 inches and five Barnes rounds into 4.5 inches. HPR's load won the round, however, with a best five-shot group measuring just 2.5 inches.

Overall, both Taylor's 1911 models performed admirably on the test range, and for the price, feature for feature, they are a hard combo to beat. For more information, visit taylorsfirearms.com or call 540-722-2017. **1911**

10 COVERT 1911s

The very name of the 1911 pistol is a testament to the design's longevity, reliability and versatility. These qualities have caused the pistol's popularity to not only remain constant since its advent, but to spike sharply in recent years. It is the pinnacle of what a semi-autopistol strives to be and rides in many concealed carry holsters.

With so many small companies offering custom and small-run 1911s, along with many of the major handgun manufacturers bringing their own version to market, there are a lot of guns for the shooter to choose from.

As classic .45s, higher-capacity 9mms and match-grade target pistols, the 1911 has a potential home with every shooter. Its thin profile has always made it a popular and comfortable CCW gun. But the classic has corners and controls that can snag too easily, and print through clothing. These pistols, however, are 1911s modified for CCW without sacrificing features or reliability for compactness.



COLT DEFENDER SERIES

From the original manufacturer of the 1911 comes the Colt Defender series. With a wonderfully contoured, full-sized grip, it's easy to handle yet compact and solid as a hammer. It's a reliable workhorse, available in either .45 ACP or 9mm, that can handle lots of range practice and many hours in the holster. (colt.com; 800-962-2658)

SPECIFICATIONS	
CALIBER	9mm, .45 ACP
BARREL	3 inches
OA LENGTH	6.75 inches
WEIGHT	24 ounces (.45), 25 ounces (9mm)
GRIPS	Hogue Wraparound
SIGHTS	Novak Carry
ACTION	SA
FINISH	Brushed stainless
CAPACITY	7+1 (.45), 8+1 (9mm)
MSRP	$899

ED BROWN EXECUTIVE CARRY

Clean and classic with all the necessary features and nothing extraneous, Ed Brown's Executive Carry sports the classic Ed Brown Bobtail housing, which reduces the projecting butt of the mainspring housing without sacrificing the full grip size or magazine capacity. The slide has been reduced to just 4.25 inches, providing minimal printing, a lighter weight in an all-steel gun and a design that pushes the limits of John Browning's original design. (edbrown.com; 573-565-3261)

SPECIFICATIONS	
CALIBER	.45 ACP
BARREL	4.25 inches
OA LENGTH	7.75 inches
WEIGHT	35 ounces (empty)
GRIPS	Checkered wood
SIGHTS	Fixed, three-dot
ACTION	SA
FINISH	Gen4
CAPACITY	7+1
MSRP	$2,945



Classic designs downsized to deliver compact 9mm to .45 ACP threat responses!

BY DAVID MACCAR



Dennis Adler Photo



KIMBER ULTRA CARRY TLE II (LG)

Here's what Kimber's concept of a CCW looks like with the bells and whistles blaring. Featuring reduced dimensions, a light weight, .45 ACP power, a 7+1 total capacity and Crimson Trace's fast-targeting Lasergrips, the TLE II is a truly complete carry package with a tactical edge. Its rounded and blended edges and beveled magazine well ensure a clean draw every time. (kimberamerica.com; 888-243-4522)

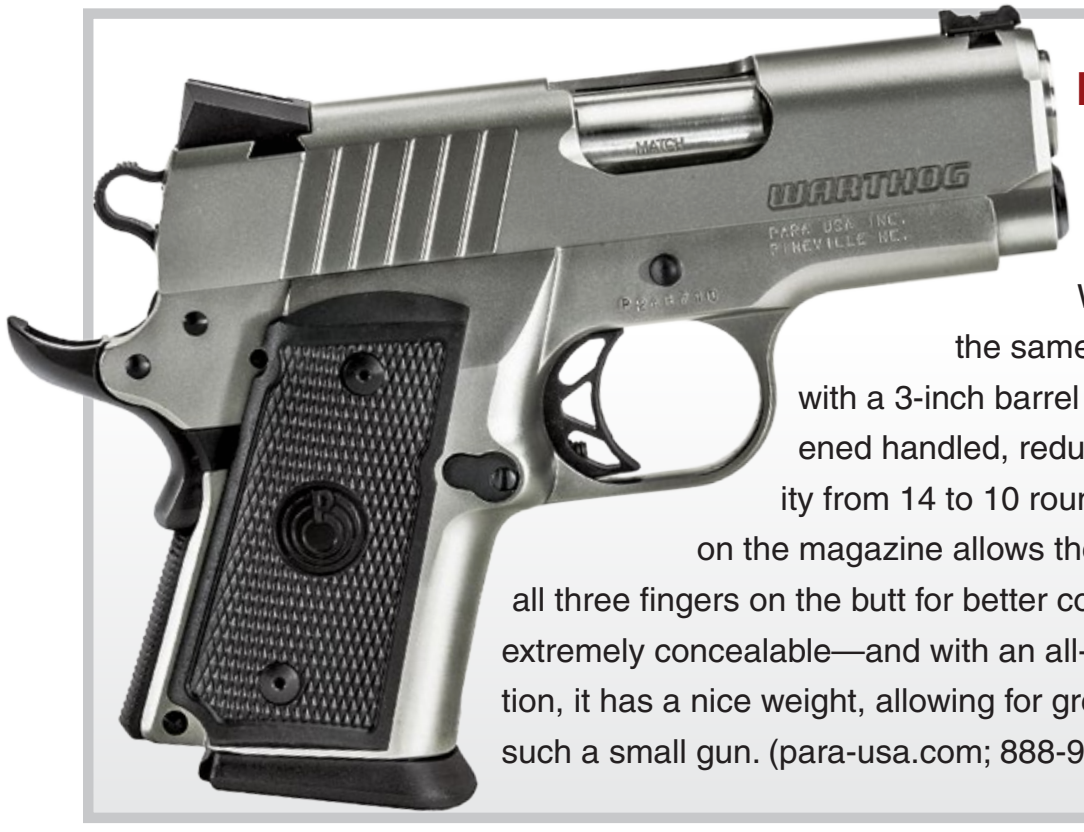
SPECIFICATIONS	
CALIBER	.45 ACP
BARREL	3 inches
OA LENGTH	6.8 inches
WEIGHT	25 ounces (empty)
GRIPS	Crimson Trace Lasergrips
SIGHTS	Tritium night sights
ACTION	SA
FINISH	Nitride
CAPACITY	7+1
MSRP	$1,393



PARA EXECUTIVE CARRY

For those who simply cannot abide a short-grip pistol, the Executive Carry strikes a unique balance between size and concealability. It has a full-sized grip under a very short barrel (3 inches) and slide (5.13 inches). It also features an Ed Brown Bobtail frame for optimal concealment, minimal printing and maximum grip, making it perfect for everyday carry, especially in a shoulder rig. Because of its shape, it will fit in most full-sized 1911 holsters. (para-usa.com; 888-999-9386)

SPECIFICATIONS	
CALIBER	.45 ACP
BARREL	3 inches
OA LENGTH	6.5 inches
WEIGHT	24 ounces (empty)
GRIPS	VZ G10
SIGHTS	Trijicon night
ACTION	SA
FINISH	Ionbond
CAPACITY	8+1
MSRP	$1,399



PARA WARTHOG

Para is famous for its high-capacity, wide-frame 1911s, breaking from the tradition single-stack magazine. The Warthog is much the same design, only with a 3-inch barrel and a shortened handled, reducing the capacity from 14 to 10 rounds. A bumper on the magazine allows the shooter to get all three fingers on the butt for better control. It's tiny, extremely concealable—and with an all-steel construction, it has a nice weight, allowing for great control with such a small gun. (para-usa.com; 888-999-9386)

SPECIFICATIONS	
CALIBER	.45 ACP
BARREL	3 inches
OA LENGTH	6.5 inches
WEIGHT	31 ounces (empty)
GRIPS	Polymer
SIGHTS	Fiber-optic front, dot rear
ACTION	SA
FINISH	Nitride
CAPACITY	10+1
MSRP	$884



MAGNUM RESEARCH INC.

The Desert Eagle 1911U was showcased recently in the pages of *Combat Handguns*. Author Mike Detty summed it up best: “The DE1911U possesses one of the best triggers of any 1911 I’ve tested. It breaks right at 3.5 pounds with very little creep and no overtravel. The trigger itself tracks straight back and forth without any binding or play. It has a very positive reset, and that made rapid shooting very easy. Firing controlled pairs at steel targets set up at 15 yards, I managed splits, or time between shots, of 28 hundredths of a second—nearly as fast as I can do with a steel-framed, full-sized gun!” (magnumresearch.com; 508-635-4273)

SPECIFICATIONS

CALIBER	.45 ACP
BARREL	3 inches
OA LENGTH	6.85 inches
WEIGHT	25.8 ounces (empty)
GRIPS	Checkered walnut
SIGHTS	Adjustable rear, dovetailed front
ACTION	SA
FINISH	Matte black
CAPACITY	6+1
MSRP	$946



SIG SAUER 1911 CARRY NIGHTMARE

It might be called the "Nightmare," but it's a dream to shoot and look at! For those who prefer a heavier, more full-sized pistol with a thin profile, the shortened Carry version of Sig's 1911 design abides with a rounded butt and Hogue grips, making for a clean draw and a secure grip in any situation. Available in .45 ACP and .357 SIG, it rides best in a crossdraw or open-loop belt holster. (sigsauer.com; 866-345-6744)

SPECIFICATIONS	
CALIBER	.357 SIG, .45 ACP
BARREL	4.2 inches
OA LENGTH	7.7 inches
WEIGHT	39 ounces (empty)
GRIPS	Hogue G10
SIGHTS	Low-profile night
ACTION	SA
FINISH	Nitron
CAPACITY	8+1
MSRP	$1,242



SPRINGFIELD EMP

This is truly an example of a fine-tuned classic. Introduced in 2007 as the Enhanced Micro Pistol (EMP), the pistol's action is 0.125 inches shorter than Springfield's full-sized 1911. This allows for a shorter grip radius and provides excellent control. The overall dimensions are some of the smallest out there, and it's loaded with features and an impressive magazine capacity. (springfield-armory.com; 800-680-6866)

SPECIFICATIONS	
CALIBER	9mm
BARREL	3 inches
OA LENGTH	6.6 inches
WEIGHT	27 ounces (empty)
GRIPS	G10
SIGHTS	Tritium three-dot
ACTION	SA
FINISH	Black hardcoat anodized frame, satin stainless slide
CAPACITY	9+1
MSRP	$1,345

WILSON COMBAT ULTRALIGHT CARRY SENTINEL

This is the smallest, lightest pistol made by the always-reliable Wilson Combat. Made with top-tier components and optimized for high-performance 9mm loads, the Ultralight Carry Sentinel is designed for concealment with a rounded-butt frame that's 0.5 inches shorter than a standard compact, with the pistol's grip guiding the hand immediately into the shooting position. It's one of the best Wilson Combat has to offer, and it's just plain tough looking. (wilsoncombat.com; 800-955-4856)



SPECIFICATIONS	
CALIBER	9mm
BARREL	3.6 inches
OA LENGTH	7.2 inches
WEIGHT	25.2 ounces (empty)
GRIPS	G10 Starburst
SIGHTS	Fiber-optic front, Battlesight rear
ACTION	SA
FINISH	Armor-Tuff
CAPACITY	8+1
MSRP	$3,875



STI ESCORT

Built on an aluminum frame, the lightweight Escort will be easy for any 1911 shooter to handle right out of the box. The 3-dot TAS sights provide easy target acquisition and help prevent snags on the draw. With a flared ejection port and bull barrel, the Escort is a fine example of a high-quality CCW 1911 from a respected manufacturer. (stiguns.com; 512-819-0656)

SPECIFICATIONS	
CALIBER	9mm, .45 ACP
BARREL	3.24 inches
OA LENGTH	7 inches
WEIGHT	23.4 ounces (.45 ACP)
GRIPS	Cocobolo
SIGHTS	3-dot TAS
ACTION	SA
FINISH	Cerakote
CAPACITY	6+1 (.45 ACP), 8+1 (9mm)
MSRP	$1,299

“As classic .45s, higher-capacity 9mms and match-grade target pistols, the 1911 has a potential home with every shooter.”

BCMGUNFIGHTER

BCMGUNFIGHTER™ VG KeyMod Version



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CYLINDER & SLIDE TRIDENT II

BY **ROB GARRETT** • PHOTOS BY **STEVE WOODS**



The trident is a three-pronged spear that, in mythology, is associated with both Neptune and Poseidon.

It is also at the center of the U.S. Navy Special Warfare insignia, where it is being clutched by a golden eagle, along with an anchor and a cocked flintlock pistol. The insignia represents the core values and mission of the Navy SEAL community. It is also the namesake for a custom 1911 from Cylinder & Slide (C&S).

The story of the C&S Trident II 1911 began in 2009, when Bill Laughridge, founder and president of the company, was teaching a 1911 Custom Pistolsmithing class in Virginia. One of his students was an active-duty SEAL who had an affinity for the 1911. During that school, the student shared his experiences with the fine sand, known as "moon dust," that plagues equipment in Iraq, Afghanistan and other unnamed locations. Those discussions served as a catalyst that sent Laughridge on a search to find a suitable finish for the 1911 that would not attract sand, dirt and other crud. The discussions also led to a set of specifications for a 1911 that would be reliable in harsh environments with minimum maintenance. To honor all Naval Special Warfare warriors, Laughridge named the pistol the Trident.

It is important to note that the Trident was not earth shattering and had no new, revolutionary features. What made the Trident different was its execution. But, to quote Laughridge, "The devil is in the details." Each modification and component was carefully evaluated to ensure durability and maximum reliability in

DoD photo

U.S. Navy SEAL-inspired .45

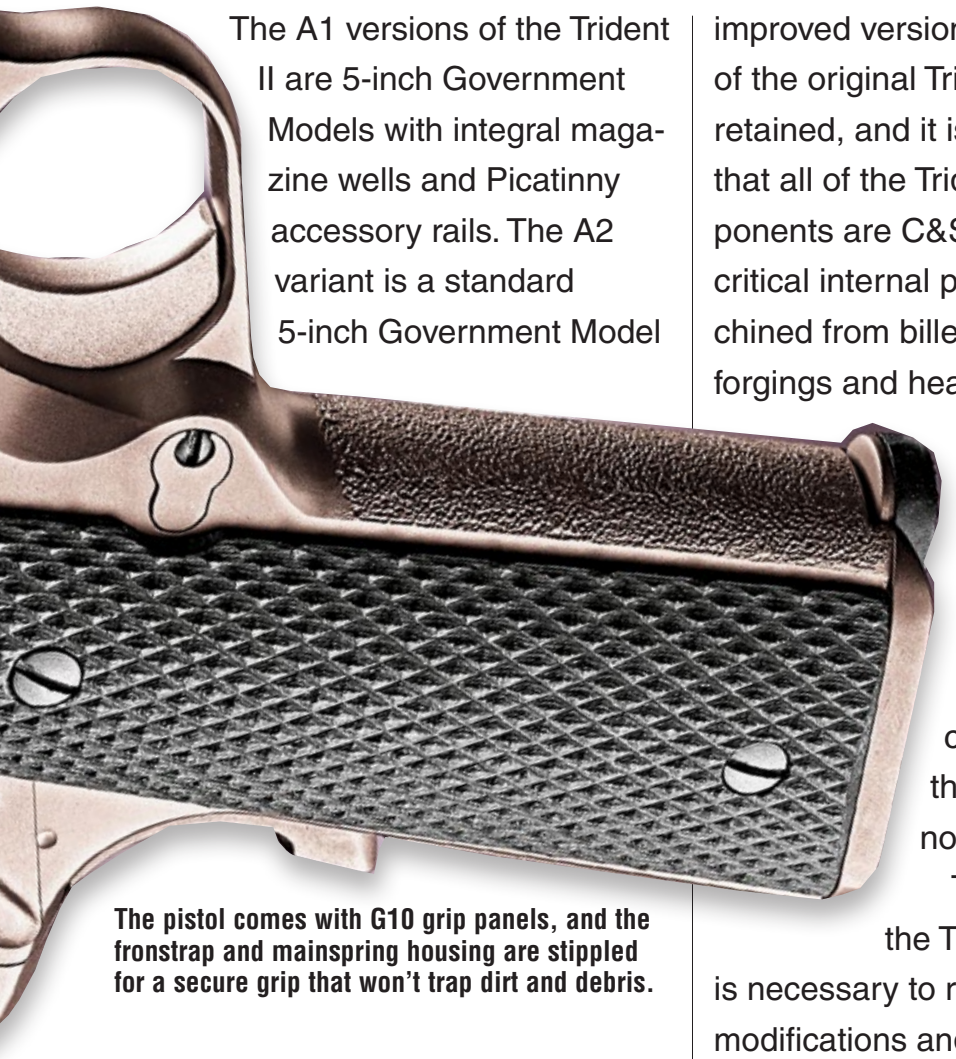


Cylinder & Slide's Trident II is a state-of-the-art 1911-style pistol that will function in any environment that may be encountered anywhere in the world.

the world's harshest environments. It is this philosophy, supported by real-world experience, that sets the Trident apart from many other 1911s.

The original Tridents utilized a Springfield Armory 1911A1 as a base platform. The Springfield Tridents provided the proof of concept, and C&S built and sold a significant number of pistols. As the Trident project grew, delivery of the base Springfield pistol became an issue. Laughridge made the decision to transition to a fully custom-built pistol using a C&S OEM slide and frame.

built to endure in the toughest conditions!



The pistol comes with G10 grip panels, and the fronstrap and mainspring housing are stippled for a secure grip that won't trap dirt and debris.

The A1 versions of the Trident II are 5-inch Government Models with integral magazine wells and Picatinny accessory rails. The A2 variant is a standard 5-inch Government Model configuration without the accessory rail. Finally, the A3 Trident II pistols are Commander-sized and do not have the mag well or accessory rail.

SEAL STEEL

Having tested the original Trident for *Combat Handguns* in 2010, I was especially excited to see the new and improved version. The basic features of the original Trident have been retained, and it is important to note that all of the Trident II's major components are C&S OEM parts. The critical internal parts are CNC-machined from billet steel or made from forgings and heat-treated throughout. Each part undergoes a rigorous inspection and is subjected to a hardness evaluation using a Rockwell testing machine. Astoundingly, the Trident II contains no MIM parts.

To fully understand the Trident concept, it is necessary to review the major modifications and choice of components. The frame on my test pistol, an A1 variant, features an integral accessory rail that has been trued to mil-spec dimensions. The frontstrap is machine-stippled to improve the gripping surface. Stippling was chosen over checkering for several reasons. Proper stippling provides a positive gripping surface without the drawbacks of checkering, which can trap dirt, skin or blood and is hard to clean. Checkering also tends to abrade gear and can be dented and broken. Another small and often overlooked detail involves stock bushings that, when improperly installed, tend to back out when removing the stocks. C&S properly torques and stakes the bushings to prevent this issue. The steel mainspring housing features a recessed lanyard loop and is stippled and cleanly blended to the frame and magazine well.



The C&S "Strong" sight (top) features a widened base for additional durability, while the rear sight (bottom) is a Heinie Ledge unit.



The dust cover features a Picatinny rail for lights and lasers, like this SureFire X400V combo unit.

The slide features front and rear cocking serrations to facilitate cycling and press checks. The C&S-made, 5-inch, drop-in barrel is matched to a finger-tight barrel bushing that has been opened up to enhance reliability. This combination gives the Trident II, on average, 2-inch accuracy at



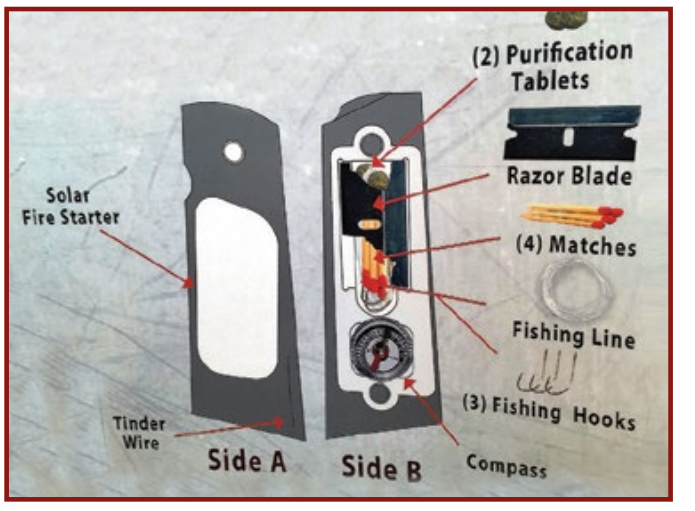
Oriskany Arms offers the Survivor FP with extra-durable Cerakote finish options.

ORISKANY ARMS 1911 SURVIVOR FP

Oriskany Arms produces several variations of full-sized, all-steel 1911s with factory add-ons that were once the province of custom pistols.

You can get extended thumb safeties, three-hole adjustable triggers, high-rise beavertail grip safeties, Novak tritium sights and skeletonized hammers. These 1911s also come with 5-inch, match-grade, 416 stainless steel barrels, 4140 heat-treated steel slides with front and rear serrations, and squared triggerguards that make it much easier to mount tactical lights and/or laser sights. Some models also come with Picatinny accessory rails, and Cerakote finish options are available. One such version from Oriskany that embodies all of these features and more is the Survivor FP.

Besides being a 1911 pistol in .45 ACP with a 7+1 capacity, plus all the "bells and whistles" that make it perfect for self- or home defense and field use, this model has Survivor grips. What look like regular-sized, black, glass-filled-nylon grip panels with waffle-like texturing are actually field-removable (using the magazine base lip) and hollow on the inside. So, besides having the comfort of a major-caliber handgun, there are some items nestled within the grip panels to help out. The right-side grip panel has a solar fire-starter (concave reflector) with a tinder wire that can double as a signaling device. Inside the left grip panel are two water purification tablets, a razor blade, four waterproof matches, nylon fishing line, three fish hooks and a magnetic compass. The survival items are contained within the grip panels by a thin aluminum sheet to keep moisture out and to help prevent them from falling out when the grips are removed.



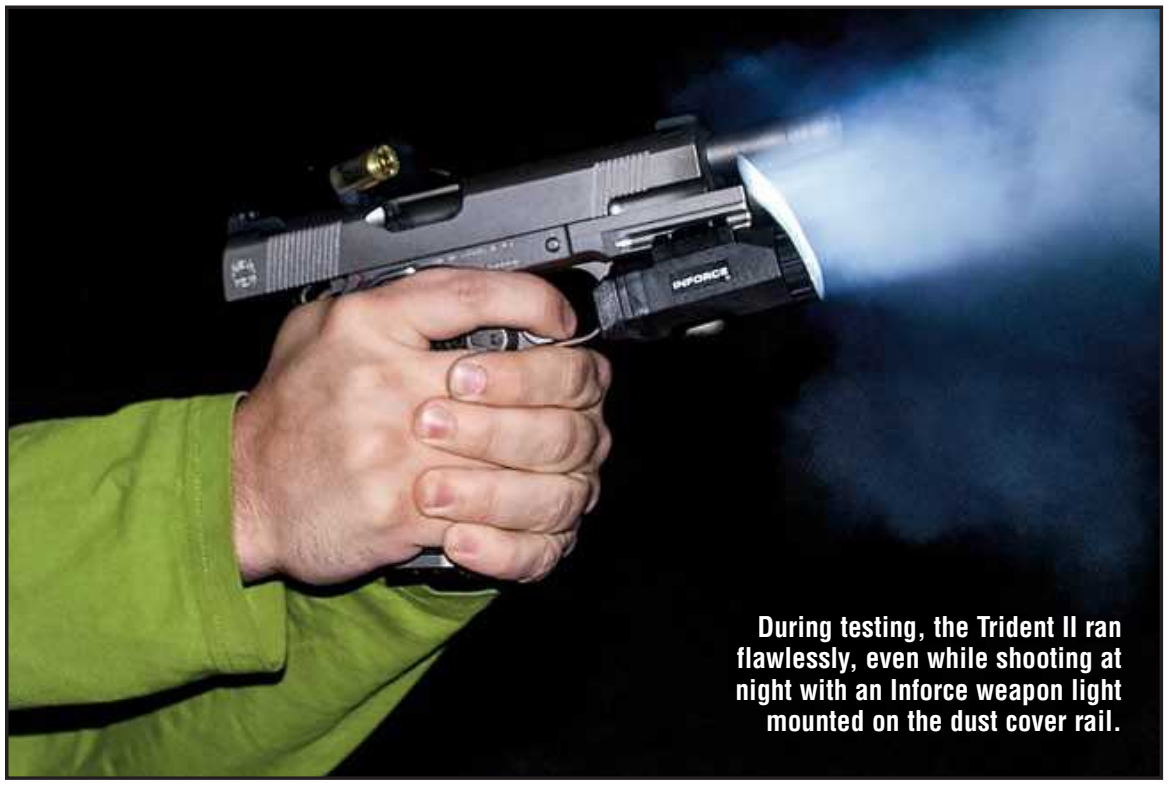
The Survior FP's grip panels come with several lifesaving essentials, including a fire-starter, matches and fishing hooks.

SPECIFICATIONS

ORISKANY ARMS 1911 SURVIVOR FP

CALIBER	.45 ACP
BARREL	5 inches
OA LENGTH	9 inches
WEIGHT	35 ounces (empty)
GRIPS	Glass-filled nylon Survivor grips
SIGHTS	Novak tritiun night
ACTION	SA
FINISH	Cerakote and other options
CAPACITY	7+1
MSRP	Starting at $1,050

The pistol comes in a black plastic hard case, and there are eight Cerakote color options. You can also get a black oxide, boron nitride or two-tone finish, plus custom laser engraving or your own logo can be added onto the slide. (oriskanyarms.com; 315-737-2196) ***—William Bell***



During testing, the Trident II ran flawlessly, even while shooting at night with an Inforce weapon light mounted on the dust cover rail.

25 yards. The ejection port is lowered, and its leading edge has been relieved to allow for the safe ejection of an unfired round. C&S uses a machined extractor that is inspected for proper heat treatment and then fitted, radiused and tensioned. The diameter of the firing-pin hole has been opened to the original .45-caliber specification.

External controls include a C&S beavertail grip safety with a palm swell that is precisely fitted and specially modified. The hammer recess is re-cut and enlarged to prevent debris from being trapped in the recess and jamming the pistol. The ambidextrous thumb safety is a C&S extended design that features reduced-width paddles. Status indicators are receded and color-coded to show white when the safety is engaged and red when the safety is in the "off" position. I first wondered why the fire-control status dots were color-coded, but former Special Forces operator and gunsmith Larry Vickers was one of the first to use red/white dots on a 1911. The red for "fire" and white for "safe" are internationally accepted indicators on many weapons. It's a nice custom touch for the pistol. The slide stop is a Greider design that provides a solid ledge for both dropping the slide during reloads and manually locking the slide to the rear.

C&S selected a solid, medium-length trigger with a solid shoe and a stainless steel bow. It's also fitted with an internal overtravel stop. The medium-length trigger allows for ample space to run the Trident II with cold weather gloves. The solid trigger lacks the fashionable three holes that can attract debris and contribute to a malfunction. The trigger pull on my test pistol broke cleanly at 4.75 pounds with no overtravel.

The Trident II features a Heinie Ledge rear sight with a cocking ledge on the forward edge of the blade. The C&S "Strong" front sight was specifically developed for the Trident project. The sides of the Strong front sight have been widened at the base, eliminating the 90-degree weak point found on traditional designs. This provides a stronger design for hard-



The Trident II features a 5-inch, match-grade barrel, and the bushing is only finger tight to facilitate tool-less field-stripping—a boon for users who work in harsh conditions.

SPECIFICATIONS

CYLINDER & SLIDE TRIDENT II

CALIBER	.45 ACP
BARREL	5 inches
OA LENGTH	8.5 inches
WEIGHT	42 ounces (empty)
GRIPS	Checkered G10
SIGHTS	C&S Strong front, Heinie Ledge rear
ACTION	SA
FINISH	Nickel-boron
CAPACITY	7+1
PRICE	Starts at $3,915

use environments. A Trijicon tritium insert is ringed with a white circle for more-positive acquisitions during a variety of conditions.

The frame, slide and all major components of the Trident II are coated with a nickel-boron finish. This allows the pistol to operate in harsh environments with little or no lubrication. Dust and dirt are the enemy of all firearms, and 1911s are notorious for not running well without proper lubrication on the rails, barrel hood and muzzle. The PVD nickel-boron finish offers exceptional lubrication and anti-corrosion properties. In addition, carbon deposits and fouling do not stick to the finish, making cleaning significantly easier.

Once the Trident II build is completed—but before being sent out for

“Each modification and component was carefully evaluated to ensure durability and maximum reliability in the world’s harshest environments.”







finishing—the pistol is test-fired at 15 yards to check for both function and reliability. It is at this step that the front sight blade is cut for the proper zero with 230-grain FMJ ammunition. The front sight is then removed and sent to Trijicon for the white circle and tritium insert. The other components are then ready to be nickel-boron coated. After all parts are returned, the pistol is then reassembled and the sights are reinstalled. The pistol is test-fired a second time for a final function check and the zero is confirmed. The test-firing is done with the three





The Trident II sports an ambidextrous thumb safety. Note the white witness mark indicating that the safety is engaged. A small red dot is visible when the safety is disengaged.

7-round, nickel-boron-coated magazines that are shipped with the pistol. During the process, a minimum of 56 rounds are fired through each pistol. While this process is both expensive and time consuming, it ensures the reliability of every Trident II.

RANGE READY

I was fortunate to receive the first production Trident II for this evaluation. Bill was also interested in getting some initial feedback, since this was the very first pistol built on the new frame and slide. During the testing, I noticed two minor issues. The first was that the lower trailing edge of the thumb safety needed to be radiused to remove a sharp edge. The second item involved the fire control and trigger pull. The nickel-boron finish resulted in a very slick trigger pull that felt lighter than the measured 4.25 pounds. Both of these were very minor issues, but Laughridge felt they were significant enough that each will be addressed in the production pistols.

To no one's surprise, the Trident II proved 100-percent reliable with a variety of ammunition. I even degreased the pistol and ran it in a completely dry condition in an effort to induce a malfunction. I tested the Trident II with three loads at a distance of 25 yards. ASYM Precision's Barnes 185-grain TSX +P ammo produced a velocity of 973 fps and a 1.75-inch best group.

PERFORMANCE

CYLINDER & SLIDE TRIDENT II .45 ACP

LOAD	VELOCITY	ACCURACY
ASYM Precision 185 Barnes TSX +P	973	1.75
PNW Arms 185 Tac Ops	977	1.90
Winchester 230 Bonded Personal Defense	924	2.10

Bullet weight measured in grains, velocity in fps by chronograph, and accuracy in inches for best five-shot groups at 25 yards.



The PNW Arms 185-grain Tac Ops is an all-copper bullet similar to the Barnes TSX design. It produced a velocity of 977 fps and a 1.95-inch best group. Finally, I tested Winchester's 230-grain Bonded Personal Defense load, which averaged 924 fps and produced a best group of 2.10 inches.

WARRIOR GRADE

The fact that a custom 1911 is still the first choice of many of today's warriors is a tribute to John Moses Browning and his steadfast creation. In truth, the Trident II is not significantly different from Browning's original design. However, modern

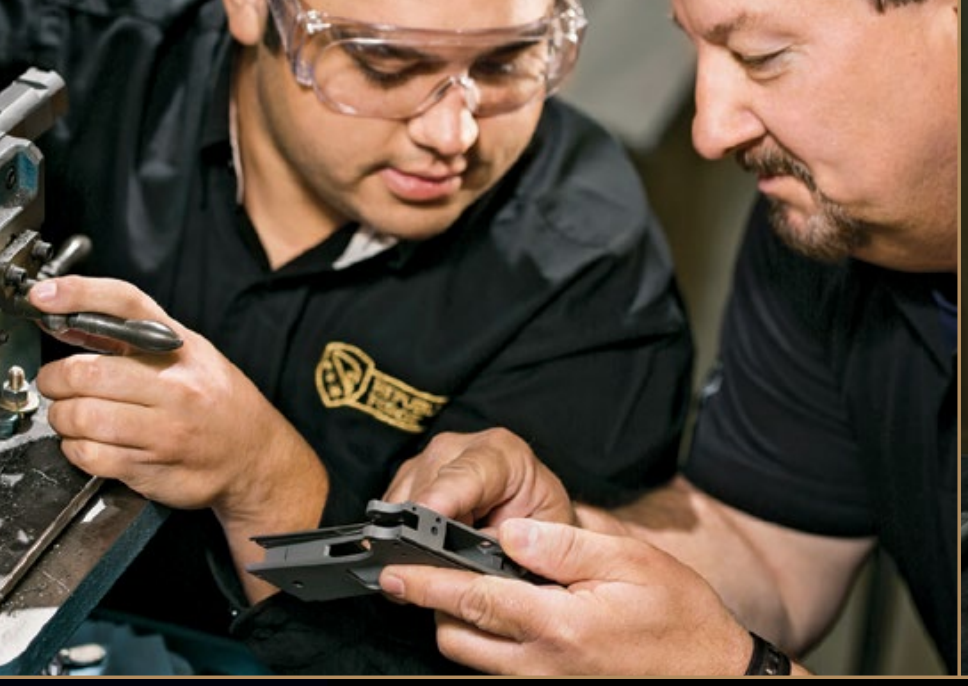


Cylinder & Slide outfits the Trident II with both forward and rear serrations, and the entire pistol has a nickel-boron finish to resist corrosion.

production technology, quality parts and specific modifications enable this 100-year-old design to continue to be relevant. While there are more expensive 1911s on the market, I am not sure that there is one more reliable. The Trident II is purpose-built to go into harm's way. Whether in the desert of Iraq, the mountains of Afghanistan or Main Street, U.S.A., the Trident II is ready for any mission. For more information, visit cylinder-slide.com or call 402-721-4277. **1911**









BUILD YOUR OWN

BY **LEN WALDRON**
PHOTOS BY **SEAN UTLEY**

If you want a master-crafted one-of-a-kind 1911, Republic Forge's program is TOUGH TO BEAT!

More than 100 years of production and active service leave little untried in the world of the 1911 pistol. It's been chopped, lengthened, lightened, refinished, re-gripped, tuned and tweaked in every imaginable way since the U.S. Army adopted John M. Browning's design in March of 1911. With so many variations in the market driving shooter preferences, how can a new company deliver something innovative in the already crowded world of the 1911? Benny Deal found a simple answer—build a 1911 from all-American parts that allows customers to choose from a variety of features to create a one-of-a-kind 1911 that suits their preferences.

U.S.-MADE WARHORSE

Republic Forge founder Benny Deal was both frustrated and inspired. An experienced and successful businessman in the petroleum services industry, Deal knew the challenges of forming a start-up and delivering a quality product and service to the marketplace. When he sought to purchase a custom 1911 for himself, Deal found the waiting lists long and the prices high, so he decided to start a business, Republic Forge, to address the problem.

But where does one begin? Deal started with the basics and chose to build his 1911s with only American parts. "It's an easy exception to make, particularly given the lower prices from foreign component parts…cut a corner here or there and improve your profit, but we chose to stick to the American parts





1911

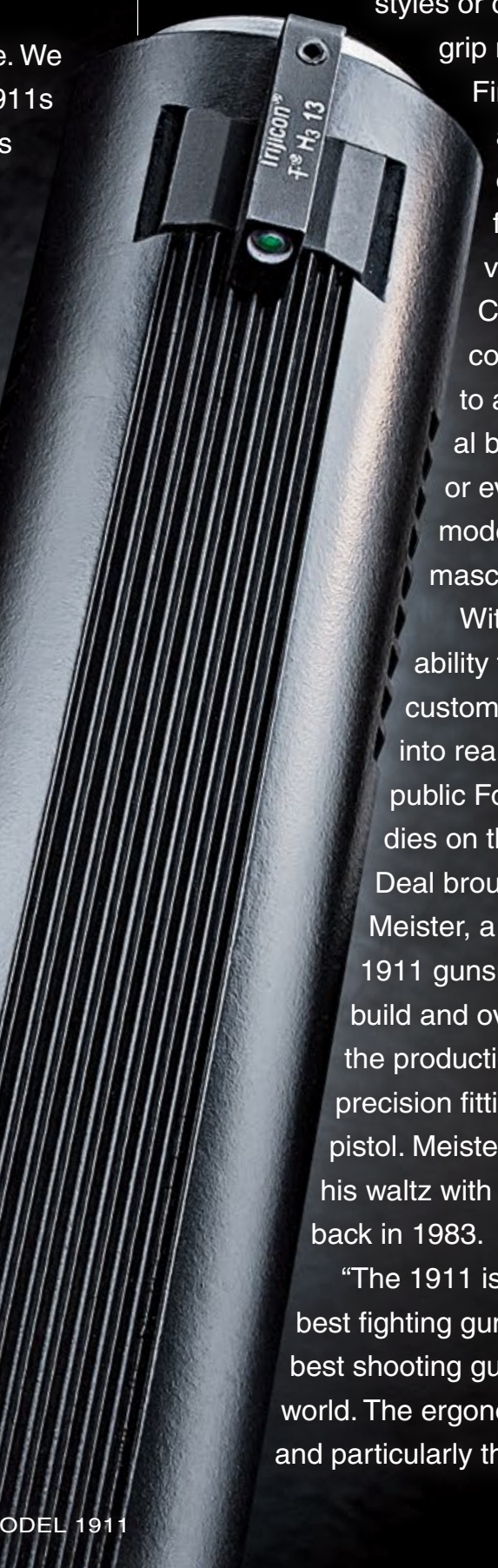
Republic Forge photos

Republic Forge makes it easy to create the 1911 of your dreams. The author chose to give his full-sized Republic Forge creation (shown) a custom SOCOM Blue Cerakote finish and contrasting mammoth ivory grip panels.

“With the Republic Forge system, you choose what you want, not what you are talked into or must settle for.”

and let our customers decide. We also endeavor to build our 1911s on American-made machines wherever possible. It’s our commitment to American-made quality.”

But Deal knew it would take more than just American parts to be successful. 1911s from Republic Forge would have to be pleasing to the eye and hand, a pleasure to fire and customized to each shooter’s preferences. To pull this off, Deal drew on his Texas ingenuity and some modern technology. Republic Forge built a website that allows users to build a virtual model of their 1911. A buyer can select between model, frame color, slide color, sights and grips, and then see a virtual image of the pistol. Selections can be switched back and forth, with dozens of permutations the buyer can experiment with before making a final selection. Once the style is chosen, the buyer selects custom options such as caliber, slide serrations, safety styles, frame modifications, target sight colors, mag well styles or custom grip materials. Finishes can also be chosen, from a variety of Cerakote color options to a traditional blued finish or even a modern Damascus steel.



The author’s 1911 came with a dovetailed Trijicon HD front sight, and the top of the slide is serrated to reduce glare while targeting.

Without the ability to turn customer choices into reality, the Republic Forge idea dies on the vine, so Deal brought in Jeff Meister, a custom 1911 gunsmith, to build and oversee the production and precision fitting of each pistol. Meister began his waltz with 1911s back in 1983.

“The 1911 is the best fighting gun and best shooting gun in the world. The ergonomics, and particularly the trigger design with its quick reset, are just unmatched.” Meister said. He is also a believer in hand-fitted, hand-tooled work on 1911s. “I enjoy the challenge of a new design concept and a customer-specific setup. It’s exciting for me, and I really enjoy the ideas I have never tried before and finding a way to make them work.”

GETTING STARTED

The Republic Forge website directs potential buyers to a “Build Your Own 1911” page where you can begin the process. Starting with a full-sized “Republic” standard frame, I began to select options in frame color, slide color, sights and grips. Colors range from Barret Bronze to Tungsten Gray, with unique choices such as Texas Tan and Blue Titanium. You can match the slide, frame and grips, or go for a two- or three-tone look. Grips range from aggressive G10 in a variety of colors to smooth, traditional ivory. Sight options are Novak night sights or BoMar adjustable. Caliber choices include .45 ACP, 9mm, 10mm, .40 S&W and .38 Super. Slide steel options are standard or Damascus, the latter being a particularly distinctive look. Frame modifications include a Recon frame with a light rail or a double-stack magazine well, carry cuts, bluing and polish options as well as target sight colors. Control options allow for a choice of a single or ambidextrous safety and cocking serrations.

Ultimately, I settled on a SOCOM Blue slide and frame that complemented the mammoth ivory handles I had seen on one of the company’s pistols previously. From a controls standpoint, I opted for the Recon slide with ambidextrous thumb safe-

SPECIFICATIONS

REPUBLIC FORGE "REPUBLIC" 1911

CALIBER	.45 ACP
BARREL	5 inches
OA LENGTH	8.25 inches
WEIGHT	41 ounces (empty)
GRIPS	Mammoth ivory
SIGHTS	Trijicon HD front, Novak night rear
ACTION	SA
FINISH	SOCOM Blue Cerakote
CAPACITY	8+1
MSRP	Starts at $2,795 ($3,745 as tested)

ties, front cocking serrations, green rear Novak night sight, a Trijicon HD front sight and a magazine well.

INSTANT CLASSIC

When you unbox a Republic Forge pistol, it's your baby. In my case, it was a proud moment. To me, the combination of the frame and slide color was a perfect match to the ivory handles. But it wasn't until I felt the whole pistol as one system that I truly appreciated the Republic Forge process. Along with the Kart match-grade barrel and stainless bushing, the overall look was clean and elegant.

Aesthetic impressions absorbed, the functional critique began. Finishing a beautiful 1911 is one thing, making it fit precisely and cycle consis-tently is another thing entirely.

"For me, the most important elements of a 1911 are reliability, accuracy and beauty, in that order. If you can't count on the pistol to fire every time, the other factors don't matter. Having said that, I look closely at barrel-to-bushing fit and slide-to-frame fit on mine or anyone else's guns," said Jeff Meister.

From a finish standpoint, Meister's fit and finish is commendable and uniform. The slide-to-frame fit is clean and precise. The parts are nicely blended and there are no observable blemishes. The trigger broke cleanly and consis-

The rear of the pistol sports enhanced features, such as a Novak rear night sight, a skeletonized hammer and an ambidextrous thumb safety.





Republic Forge hand-tuned the custom 1911's skeletonized, serrated trigger so it would break crisply at between 4.25 and 4.5 pounds with every pull, just as the author requested.

tently between 4.25 and 4.5 pounds, exactly where I asked Meister to tune it. The safeties functioned properly and the thumb safety snapped distinctly into both its positions. The front and rear cocking serrations, in my book, are a must for a full-sized 1911, along with 25-lpi front- and backstrap serrations.

In retrospect, the only change I might have made was an arched mainspring housing for purely ergonomic reasons. But the straight, serrated lines on this pistol contrast nicely with the natural contours of the mammoth ivory grip panels, so it's only a minor consideration. The only change I made to the setup was highly specific to my preferences: I dressed the slide stop/release to better facilitate assembly and disassembly. Again, this is a non-standard and highly personal change.

PERFORMANCE

It's a surprising pleasure to have a pistol show up exactly as you want it to look and feel, with a trigger set exactly where you asked for it. But it still must hit the target where the sights align and do so without failures. The Republic Forge 1911 was a pleasure to shoot and required no sight adjustment. Ejection and extraction were reliable, and the brass arched up and away, reflecting the proper geometry and tuning of the extractor and ejec-

"The Republic Forge 1911 was a pleasure to shoot and required no sight adjustment."



Republic Forge equips its full-sized 1911s with 5-inch Kart National Match barrels for top-notch accuracy. Also note the pistol's lowered and flared ejection port for enhanced reliability with a variety of .45 ACP loads.

tor. From 230-grain ball to 185-grain jacketed hollow points, the Republic Forge 1911 fed and fired with no errors. The barrel liked the 200-grain wadcutters the best, but there were no noticeable differences in function between the various loads.

Buying a Republic Forge pistol was a new and pleasant experience. With the Republic Forge system, you choose what you want, not what you are talked into or must settle for. Ultimately, the company delivers a highly customized, one-of-a-kind pistol at a competitive price. For more information, visit republicforge.com or call 806-648-1911. **1911**

The author's 1911 features a Recon frame, which includes a fully finished and notched Picatinny rail for adding lights or lasers to handle a variety of scenarios.

The sleek Republic 1911 has a tight slide-to-frame fit, and the expertly finished slide sports both forward and rear serrations for easier manipulations in the field.



FIREPOWER

ROCK RIVER

Packing .45 ACP power and guaranteed precision, these hard-charging pistols deliver no-nonsense results!

BY **RICHARD L. JOHNSON**

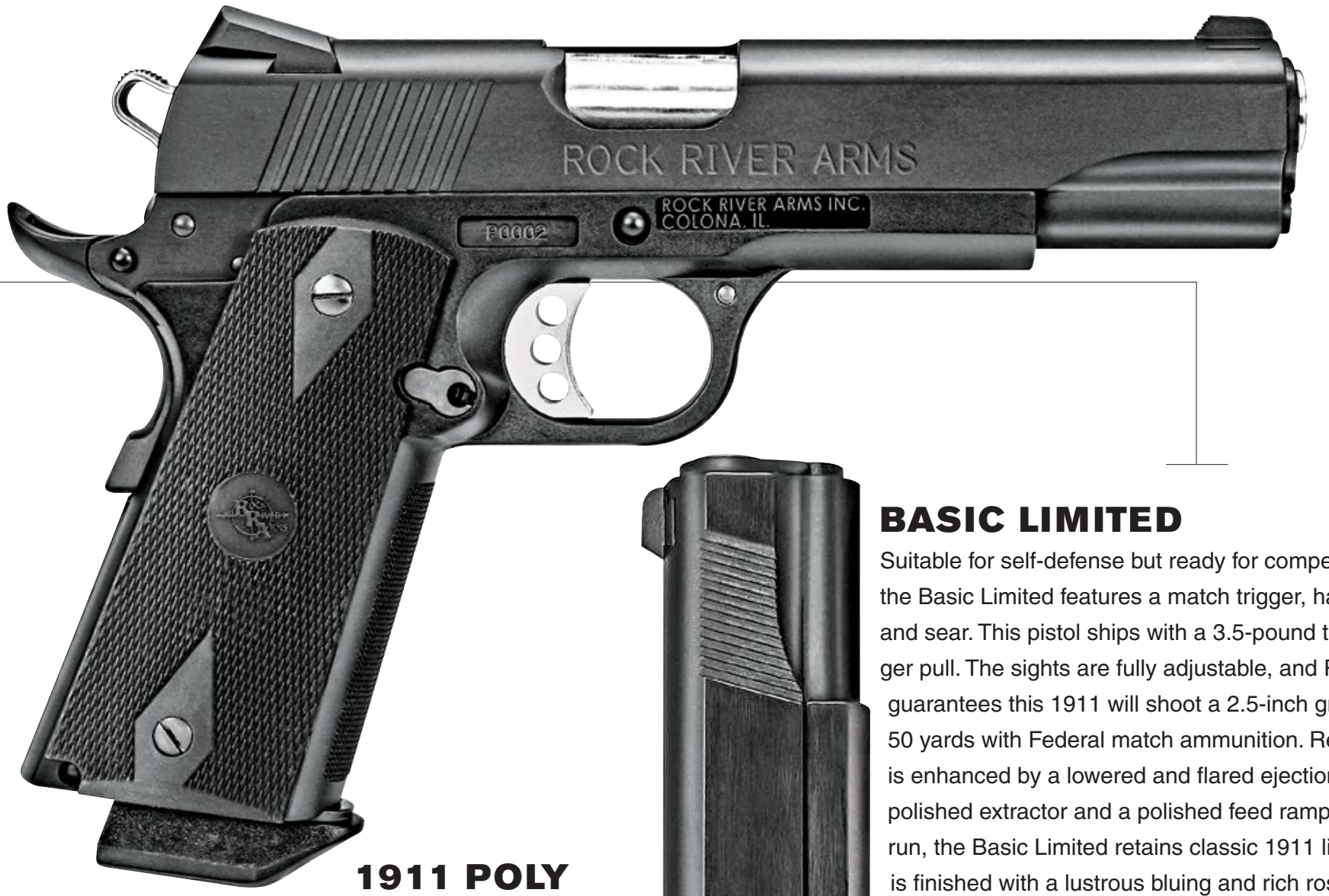
From the hands of a national competitor to the drop-leg holster of a SWAT officer effecting a hostage rescue, Rock River Arms (RRA) builds 1911 pistols that get the job done. Accurate and reliable, these handguns put impressive .45-caliber firepower into the hands of professionals and enthusiasts alike.

Known also for its AR rifles, RRA got its start in 1996 by building custom 1911 pistols. That tradition of excellence continues today with the company's current crop of Browning-inspired handguns. The DEA, FBI and other law enforcement officers have carried RRA guns into harm's way. Additionally, these guns have been used by a large number of competition shooters and homeowners looking for the best 1911.

The current RRA catalog lists 1911 pistols using modern materials, time-proven techniques and finishing that would make any craftsman proud. Rock River Arms also offers customizations such as special Cerakote finish options. For the hobbyist and professional gunsmith, the company also offers a wide range of parts, including match-grade pieces to enhance the reliability and accuracy of your own 1911 handgun.

Photos Courtesy
Rock River Arms





1911 POLY

Taking the iconic John Moses Browning design into the 21st century, RRA manufactures a classic 1911 pistol with a modern polymer frame and mainspring housing. The polymer is reinforced by steel inserts for strength and helps bring the overall weight of this full-sized pistol to a hair under 2 pounds. RRA put a Parkerized finish on the steel slide for corrosion resistance. Drift-adjustable sights are dovetailed into the slide. The 1911 Poly ships with a pair of seven-round magazines and a polymer holster for immediate carry on the range or into the field.

SPECIFICATIONS

CALIBER: .45 ACP • **BARREL:** 5 inches
OA LENGTH: 8.63 inches • **WEIGHT:** 31.52 ounces
SIGHTS: Dovetailed front and rear
ACTION: SA • **FINISH:** Parkerized
GRIPS: Rubber • **CAPACITY:** 7+1 • **MSRP:** $925



BASIC LIMITED

Suitable for self-defense but ready for competition, the Basic Limited features a match trigger, hammer and sear. This pistol ships with a 3.5-pound trigger pull. The sights are fully adjustable, and RRA guarantees this 1911 will shoot a 2.5-inch group at 50 yards with Federal match ammunition. Reliability is enhanced by a lowered and flared ejection port, a polished extractor and a polished feed ramp. Built to run, the Basic Limited retains classic 1911 lines and is finished with a lustrous bluing and rich rosewood grip panels. The frontstrap and mainspring housing both have 25-lines-per-inch checkering.

SPECIFICATIONS

CALIBER: .45 ACP • **BARREL:** 5 inches
OA LENGTH: 8.63 inches
WEIGHT: 37.92 ounces
GRIPS: Rosewood
SIGHTS: Front blade, adjustable rear
ACTION: SA • **FINISH:** Blued
CAPACITY: 7+1 • **MSRP:** $1,950



ROCK RIVER FIREPOWER



CARRY PISTOL

Ready for home defense or duty use, the Carry Pistol is a 1911 designed for serious business. RRA tuned these pistols for ultra reliability thanks to features that include an extended ejector, an enlarged ejection port and a specially tuned extractor. To protect the gun from the elements when carried, the guns have a Parkerized finish. The Carry Pistol is outfitted with top-notch Heinie sights that include a rear sight with a hard edge for single-handed emergency slide manipulations. Even though the gun has a serious purpose, it is ready for the weekend match with an accuracy guarantee of 2.5 inches at 50 yards with match ammunition.

SPECIFICATIONS

CALIBER: .45 ACP • **BARREL:** 5 inches • **OA LENGTH:** 8.63 inches • **WEIGHT:** 36.96 ounces • **GRIPS:** Rosewood
SIGHTS: Heinie night • **ACTION:** SA • **FINISH:** Parkerized • **CAPACITY:** 7+1 • **MSRP:** $1,650

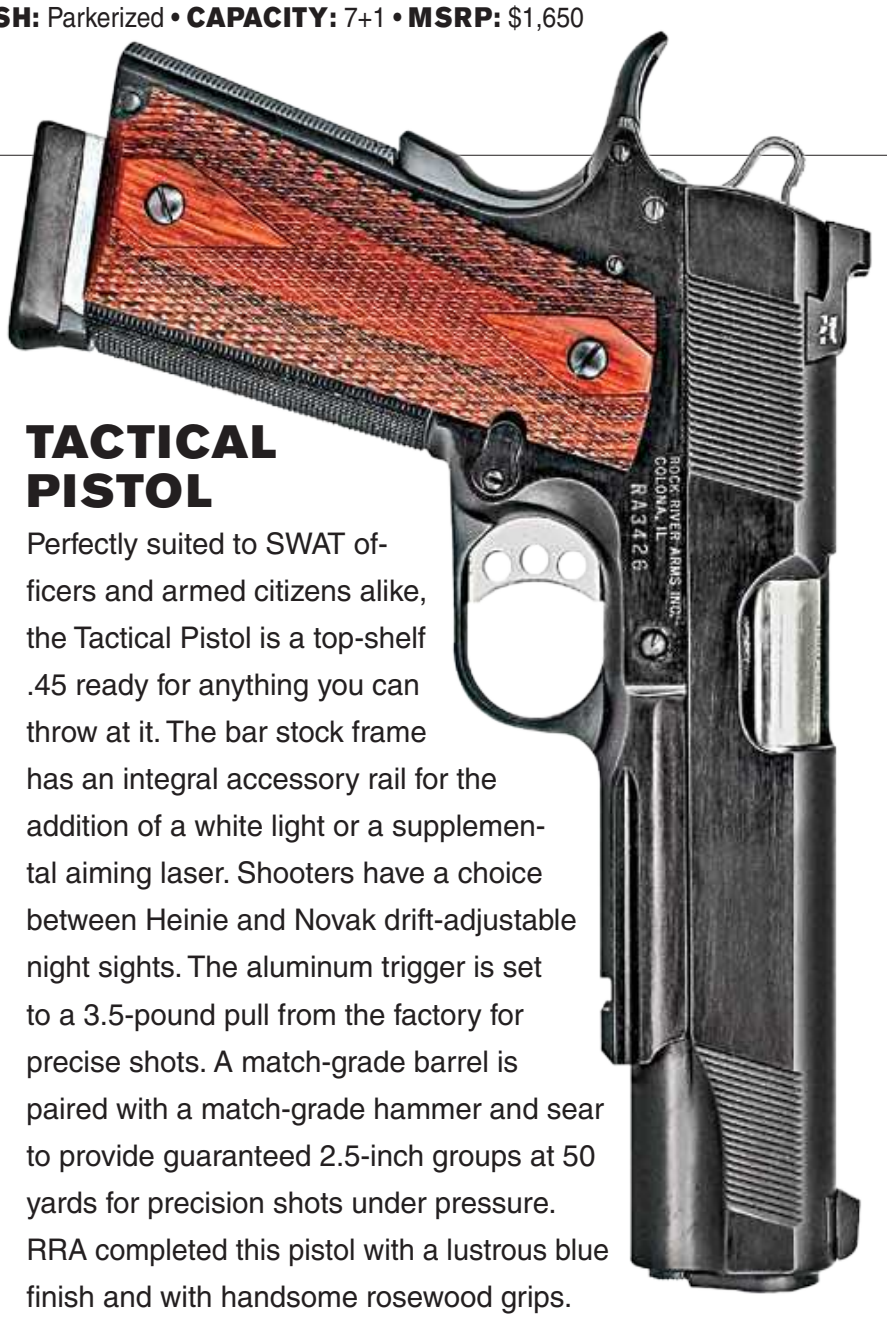


NM HARDBALL

Outfitted with a throated Kart National Match barrel and bushing, it is clear at the first glance that the NM Hardball is a 1911 built for accuracy. RRA builds these pistols with a forged National Match frame and forged National Match slide. Additional features include the company's speed trigger, a polished feed ramp and reliability tuning. According to RRA, the NM Hardball is CMP competition legal. A flat mainspring housing is standard, with options available for 20-, 25- and 30-lpi checkering. The pistols are given a beautiful blued finish and are fitted with deluxe walnut grips.

SPECIFICATIONS

CALIBER: .45 ACP • **BARREL:** 5 inches
OA LENGTH: 8.5 inches
WEIGHT: 35.84 ounces
GRIPS: Walnut • **ACTION:** SA
SIGHTS: Front blade, adjustable rear
FINISH: Blued • **CAPACITY:** 7+1
MSRP: $2,550



TACTICAL PISTOL

Perfectly suited to SWAT officers and armed citizens alike, the Tactical Pistol is a top-shelf .45 ready for anything you can throw at it. The bar stock frame has an integral accessory rail for the addition of a white light or a supplemental aiming laser. Shooters have a choice between Heinie and Novak drift-adjustable night sights. The aluminum trigger is set to a 3.5-pound pull from the factory for precise shots. A match-grade barrel is paired with a match-grade hammer and sear to provide guaranteed 2.5-inch groups at 50 yards for precision shots under pressure. RRA completed this pistol with a lustrous blue finish and with handsome rosewood grips.

SPECIFICATIONS

CALIBER: .45 ACP • **BARREL:** 5 inches • **OA LENGTH:** 8.63 inches
WEIGHT: 37.6 ounces • **GRIPS:** Rosewood
SIGHTS: Tritium front, Heinie or Novak rear • **ACTION:** SA
FINISH: Blued • **CAPACITY:** 7+1 • **MSRP:** $2,200



BULLSEYE WADCUTTER

For those shooters wanting a 1911 with superb accuracy and the ability to add an optic, RRA offers the Bullseye Wadcutter with Slide Mount. These pistols delete the standard iron sights and instead feature a forged National Match slide with a rail. Accuracy enhancements on this gun include a Kart National Match barrel, a forged National Match frame, a match-grade speed trigger and a match-grade Commander hammer. So precise are these pistols that Rock River Arms guarantees 1.5-inch groups at 50 yards with Federal match ammunition. Rosewood grips and a rich blued finish are standard.

SPECIFICATIONS

CALIBER: .45 ACP • **BARREL:** 5 inches • **OA LENGTH:** 8.63 inches
WEIGHT: 42.72 ounces • **GRIPS:** Rosewood • **SIGHTS:** None
ACTION: SA • **FINISH:** Blued • **CAPACITY:** 7+1 • **MSRP:** $2,500

“ ...these guns have been used by a large number of competition shooters and homeowners looking for the best 1911. ”

LIMITED MATCH

Exceptional accuracy and a brushed, hard-chrome finish help the Limited Match 1911 stand out in any competition or social setting. Black G10 laminate grip panels with up to 40-lpi checkering enhance this pistol’s aesthetics. Reliability tuning and match-grade parts ensure the gun puts rounds where they need to go. A National Match frame, slide and throated Kart barrel work in concert with the speed trigger, match-grade hammer and sear to provide 1.5-inch groups at 50 yards. An extended magazine release and an ambidextrous thumb safety round out the high-end features of the Limited Match.

SPECIFICATIONS

CALIBER: .45 ACP • **BARREL:** 5 inches
OA LENGTH: 8.63 inches • **GRIPS:** G10
SIGHTS: Front blade, adjustable rear
WEIGHT: 36.8 ounces
ACTION: SA
FINISH: Hard chrome
CAPACITY: 7+1
MSRP: $3,600

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Rock River Arms
309-792-5780
rockriverarms.com

FRAG

BY **DAVID BAHDE** • PHOTOS BY **STEVE WOODS**

Guncrafter Industries' hand-crafted, ultra-tough and accurate 1911 is redefining the fighting pistol standard!

Guncrafter Industries' FRAG is a true combat 1911 that is built to the highest possible standards to ensure it will perform when you need it most.

.45 ACP



Every time an "expert" tells me the 1911 is dead, it makes me wonder what planet they are living on.

There is no doubt that polymer pistols are on the rise. They are simple, can be inexpensive and generally work well. They make it easy for those with no interest in anything beyond practicality. However, the idea the 1911 is some antiquated dinosaur no one wants is just pure fantasy. Having carried and used a 1911 pistol for over three decades, they have never been more popular, nor have they seen such broad appeal.

Once relegated to two or three real choices on the market, 1911 users now have dozens of makes, models and calibers to choose from. Imports are available at below the cost of your favorite polymer pistol. Custom pistols reach the sky in cost and can be configured in any way you care to afford. Steel or alloy construction allows for customization reaching levels of artistry. Even the polymer pistol crowd is jumping on that bandwagon. Not everyone wants a hunk of metal or plastic you "just shoot." Seeing polymer pistols with customized slides, stippled frames and $2,000 price tags only serves to prove my point. Gun buyers in America want choices, and currently there are many when it comes to the 1911.

Custom-built 1911 pistols intended to provide the utmost in reliability with a minimum of features represent one of the increasingly popular segments of the market. Designed for serious work and carry, they include only the features that have proven essential over decades of use. While some factory pistols are built on the same premise, many buyers still want the personal touch of a custom-built pistol. They just have a feel like no other. One company dedicated to this market is Guncrafter Industries. More widely known for its .50 GI cartridge and pistols, the company also makes some of the best .45 ACP 1911 pistols you can buy.

HAND-BUILT HARDWARE

My introduction to Alex Zimmermann and Guncrafter Industries came in the form of a Commander-sized .50 GI pistol, the M3. It was a pistol and caliber that became one of my favorites for daily carry and use. Built to incredibly high standards, it was simple, rugged, accurate and reliable. Later testing of Guncrafter's





Pistol With No Name acquainted me with the company's .45 ACP pistols. Built to the same high standards, it lacked what I call the "billboard array" seen on many pistols these days. Thanks to laser engraving machines, many 1911 pistols might as well be advertising billboards. This pistol had no markings on the slide other than those required by the ATF. It went with me to every training school or shooting event, occasionally covering for more costly pistols that failed. It was the epitome of a fighting 1911 pistol. When the chance to test Guncrafter's latest iteration of this design came up I jumped on it. The FRAG starts with the same premise and adds a few improvements.



The gun's frontstrap, mainspring housing and Aluma-Grips all feature the"FRAG" pattern for a truly solid hold in any condition with or without gloves.



The high-swept beavertail grip safety (top) helps prevent hammer bite, and the front of the slide has serrations (bottom) for quick press checks.

"FRAG" refers to the checkering pattern on the grip panels, frontstrap and mainspring housing. Rather than checkering, the company provides a series of squares resembling old World War II-era "pineapple" hand grenades. The premise for this it allows for a better grip with less wear and tear on the hands. Over the years, checkering has become more aggressive. It locks the pistol in place, especially with gloves. For some, myself included, the more aggressive the better. With CNC machines becoming the norm, all kinds of different patterns are now available. The FRAG pattern was first seen on grips and many shooters liked it, prompting the same treatment for this pistol.

FRAG FEATURES

The FRAG starts with a forged frame and slide that are hand fitted. Make no mistake, there is nothing "production" about GI's pistols. Every one is hand built by Zimmermann, his brother and Guncrafter's experienced pistol builders. The pistol has a tight slide-to-frame fit, and the match-grade barrel is fitted for reliability and the best possible accuracy. Even the small parts are tool steel. The oversized, match-grade bushing fits tightly but can be removed by hand. The pistol's internals are also fitted by hand, resulting in one of the best triggers I've ever used in a 1911 pistol designed for hard use. It is crisp, predictable and reliable,

SPECIFICATIONS

GUNCRAFTER INDUSTRIES FRAG

CALIBER	.45 ACP
BARREL	5 inches
OA LENGTH	8.7 inches
WEIGHT	38 ounces (empty)
GRIPS	Aluma-Grips
SIGHTS	Gold bead front, U-notch rear
ACTION	SA
FINISH	Melonite
CAPACITY	8+1
MSRP	$3,285

breaking at 4.5 pounds. The thumb safety is crisp and set to just the right level of tension. Run your hands over the grip safety and there are no sharp edges; it is mated to the slide perfectly. Cocking serrations appear on the front and back of the slide, and the top of the slide is grooved.

The robust sights are of Zimmerman's design. The rear has a nice ledge and no dots, which is my preference. The front sight is melted into the slide using a gold bead, a style that's regaining popularity among longtime 1911 users. Easy to pick up in most lighting conditions, these sights do not break like fiber-optic units. Sharp edges are removed through a carry melt treatment that is subdued but noticeable. The only marking on the slide is "FRAG," making this pistol sleek, clean and uncluttered.

Both the frontstrap and mainspring housing use the FRAG treatment, as well as the grip panels. The entire pistol is coated in Melonite, about as durable a finish as possible on a firearm. Each pistol is shipped in a Guncrafter Industries cordura pistol case along with two Wilson Combat Elite eight-round .45 ACP magazines.



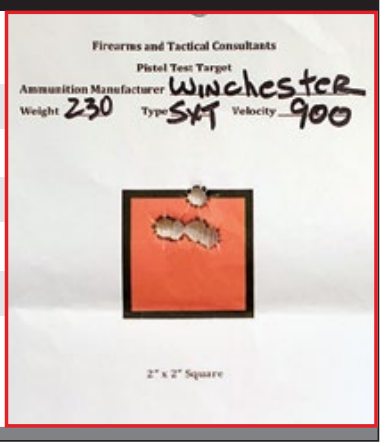
The top of the smooth, rounded slide is serrated to help reduce glare when sighting in. Also note the FRAG's fast-targeting gold bead front sight.

PERFORMANCE

GUNCRAFTER INDUSTRIES FRAG .45 ACP

LOAD	VELOCITY	ACCURACY
Federal 230 Tactical HST	894	1.40
Hornady 230 TAP	877	1.50
Speer 200 Gold Dot +P	1,084	1.55
Speer 230 Gold Dot	915	1.74
Winchester Ranger 230 SXT	900	1.00

Bullet weight measured in grains, velocity in fps by chronograph and accuracy in inches for best five-shot groups at 25 yards.



At the range, I started by sending 100 rounds of carry ammunition downrange to sight in. I then carried the GI FRAG over several weeks in a new Milt Sparks Nexus holster. Carrying a full-sized pistol is the norm for me, and Milt Sparks has long made some of the best holsters you can buy for this task. The Nexus proved to be no exception. Fit and finish were superb and the pistol snapped into place, sitting perfectly on my hip. This holster included Milt Sparks' new self-closing neodymium magnetic loop fasteners. Having used similar holsters for years, snapping them into place ranges from problematic to a complete pain. Those on the Nexus are easily the most secure and easiest snaps I've ever used. They fall right into place and never come loose. This holster carried several other 1911 pistols with ease, and has stayed put carrying my Delta Elite.

Carrying the pistol with several types of covering garments, the FRAG treatment on the pistol never caused an issue with concealment or during a draw, especially with this holster; it holds the pistol really close to the body. The grips did catch on a closer-fitting shirt a couple times, but these grip panels are not overly aggressive. Similar grip panels sit on my normal carry pistol

A



The 5-inch, match-grade barrel is held in place with a heavy-duty, match-grade bushing for a tight lockup and enhanced accuracy. Both are coated in Melonite for extra durability.

and have not been an issue. All in all, the FRAG carries concealed as well as any 1911 pistol.

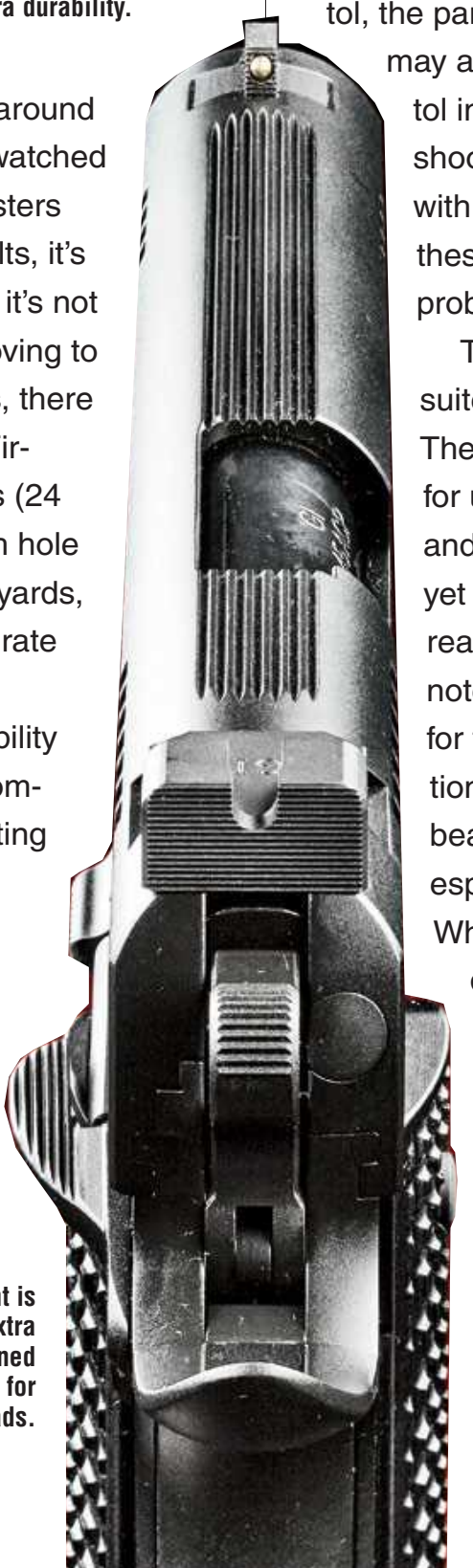
SHOOTING IMPRESSIONS

Accuracy with the FRAG was impressive. Every Guncrafter Industries pistol I've ever tested has been accurate, but this one particularly liked the Winchester 230-grain SXT ammunition. My best group at 25 yards measured right at an inch.

"The pistol's internals are also fitted by hand, resulting in one of the best triggers I've ever used in a 1911 pistol designed for hard use."

Everything else fell around 1.5 inches. Having watched Wilson Combat's testers achieve similar results, it's clearly possible, but it's not the norm for me. Moving to real-world distances, there was no difference. Firing three magazines (24 rounds) into a 2-inch hole from off-hand at 15 yards, this pistol is as accurate as a 1911 can get.

The pistiol's reliability was as expected: completely flawless. Testing was completed with several magazines, primarily the Wilson Combat Elite magazine provided and my tried-and-true Chip McCormick Power



The U-notch rear sight is made of steel for extra durability, and it's designed to serve as a ledge for emergency reloads.

magazines using 10-8 Performance basepads. The FRAG worked with them all, including some older ACT magazines and Colt factory seven-rounders.

I tested the pistol with bare hands and while wearing gloves. The FRAG treatment on the pistol really locks things in place yet it is pretty soft on the hands. Soft, of course, is always relative, but it is easier on my hands than standard checkering. Over the course of the day, the grip never bothered me. If you like checkering, you will like this treatment. When I wore gloves while handling the pistol, the panels were awesome. I may as well have had the pistol in a vice. Whether you're shooting bare-handed or with gloves, I don't think these grips will call you any problems on the range.

The sights are well suited to a fighting pistol. The rear sight ledge allows for unconventional reloads and clearance procedures, yet it conceals well. The rear sight has a U-shaped notch and is a bit rounded for faster target acquisitions. The gold or brass bead is easy to pick up, especially in daylight. Where tritium is not required or needed, this style is fast becoming my favorite front sight.

BIG-BORE SECURITY

Everything on this pistol worked as you would expect from a custom pistol. The



The FRAG comes with an extended, left-side-mounted thumb safety, but ambidextrous safeties are available upon request.

safety was positive, and it stayed put while carrying the pistol concealed. As mentioned, the trigger was great, with a solid reset that was easy to find. Over the course of the day, the pistol just sort of melted into my hand like only truly custom 1911s do.

For concealed carry, my preference would be an ambidextrous safety, as that makes it easier to use the pistol in case my strong hand is injured, but that is a personal preference. Otherwise, the FRAG from is just about perfect for me. If you are looking for a no-nonsense, custom-built 1911 without unwanted bells and whistles, the .45 ACP FRAG may be just the ticket. For more information, visit guncrafterindustries.com or call 479-665-2466. **1911**

MILT SPARKS NEXUS



The Nexus IWB holster from Milt Sparks is designed to hold your 1911 close to your body for discreet carry.

Carrying a full-sized 1911 pistol requires a quality holster.

Having done so for decades, I have tried them all. Primarily carrying inside the waistband (IWB), comfort is critical. While plastic is popular, leather remains my preference, especially for my custom 1911 pistols. Leather holsters epitomize the saying "you get what you pay for." Cheaper choices are available, but holsters from the best builders carry better, last longer and facilitate long-term carry. Milt Sparks has been a leader in the holster-making world since its inception.

MAGNETIC LOOP: **The Milt Sparks Nexus is an example of high quality with proven functionality. Made of cowhide and horsehide, it is very well made. Currently available for 1911-style pistols, the Nexus holds the gun tight to your body, low on the belt and solidly in place. Canted for concealment, the gun remains easy to draw to target. The Nexus also features Milt Sparks' new neodymium magnetic loop, making it easy to mount and unmount the holster as needed.**

TEST RESULTS: **I tested the Nexus with my Guncrafter Industries FRAG pistol, as well as my custom Colt, a Kimber HD Carry and a couple other 1911s, and it proved to be the most comfortable holster I've used in a long time. Locking in place nicely, it allowed for a smooth draw and easy reholstering. The magnetic snaps are a game changer, completely removing one of the most annoying aspects of these holsters entirely. Easy to put on, the holster never moved and worked perfectly over several weeks of hard use. If you are in need of a high-quality IWB holster for a 1911, give Milt Sparks a close look. (miltsparks.com; 208-377-5577)** ***—David Bahde***

STI

The race-ready Marauder from STI combines the handling and feel of the classic 1911 with high-capacity 9mm firepower. It's available with 17-, 20- (shown) and 26-round magazines.

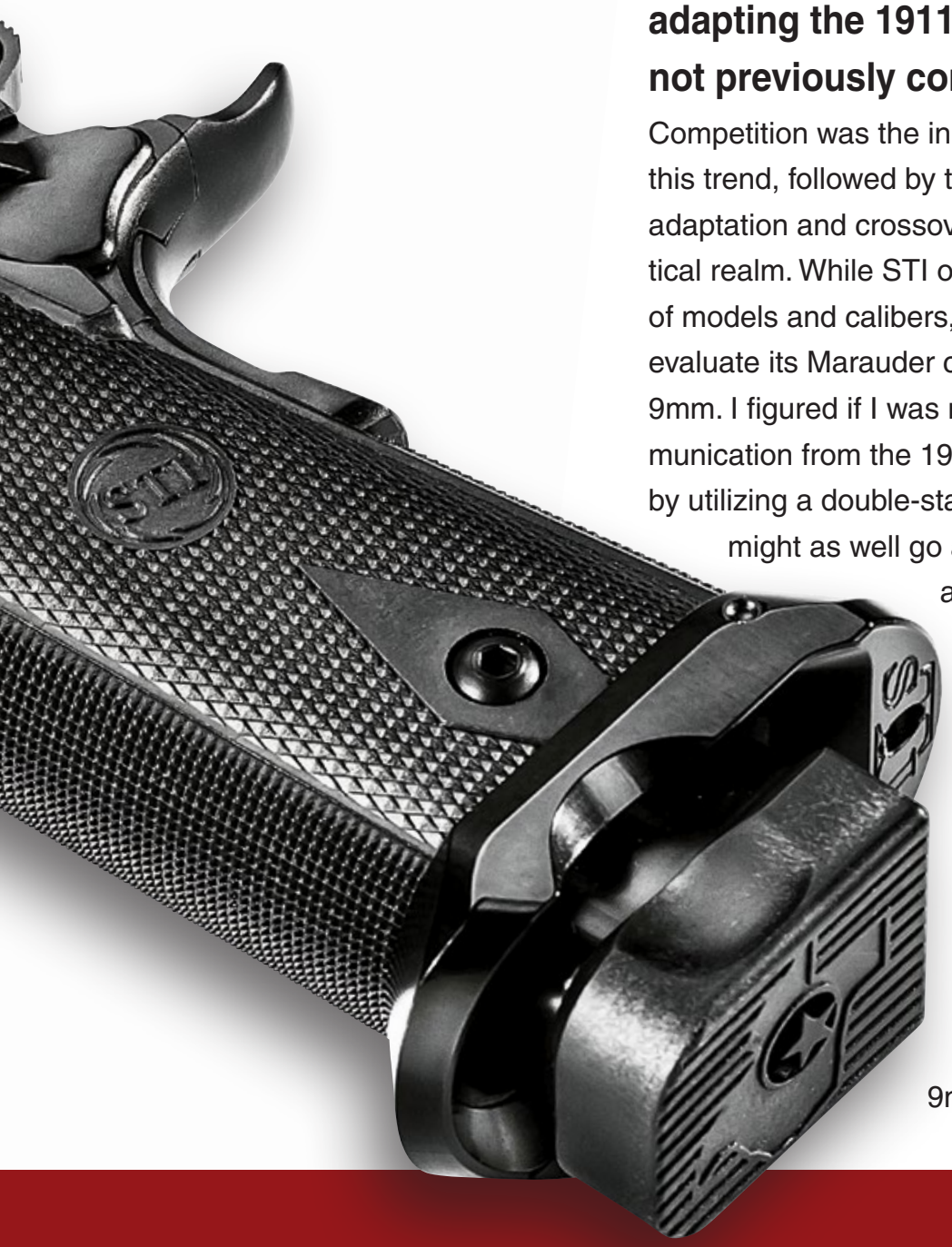
Photos courtesy STI

MARAUDER 9mm



This double-stack will deliver game-ending accuracy on the course or in the real world!

BY **TODD BURGREEN**



STI International is at the forefront of modernizing and adapting the 1911 into forms not previously conceived.

Competition was the initial drive for this trend, followed by the inevitable adaptation and crossover into the tactical realm. While STI offers a myriad of models and calibers, I chose to evaluate its Marauder chambered in 9mm. I figured if I was risking excommunication from the 1911 fraternity by utilizing a double-stack version, I might as well go all the way and chamber it in 9mm in lieu of .45 ACP. I do not want to turn this article into a 9mm-versus-.45 ACP debate. Let's just say that modern 9mm loads have come a long way from full metal jacket (FMJ) bullets. Did I mention that the STI Marauder 9mm features 17-, 20- or 26-round magazines? It's food for thought. Right or wrong, the consideration of handguns chambered in 9mm becomes more feasible as capacity increases for many.

COMPETITION-BORN NINE

STI literature clearly states that the Marauder stems from 3-Gun competitors requesting an STI product tailored to their needs. Debate rages over the benefits gained from participating in "gun games" as well as equipment derived from competition for use in the tactical world. As with most topics, the truth lies in the middle, especially after the topic gets heated. I think we all accept that professional competition shooters are the highest skilled "pistoleers" in the world—after all, that is what they do for a living, getting to expend time and money on improving skill levels

STI MARAUDER 9mm

SPECIFICATIONS

STI MARAUDER	
CALIBER	9mm
BARREL	5.01 inches
OA LENGTH	8.5 inches
WEIGHT	41 ounces (empty)
GRIPS	Polymer
SIGHTS	Dawson fiber-optic front, adjustable rear
ACTION	SA
FINISH	Matte black
CAPACITY	20+1
MSRP	$2,399

that most of us just can not imagine. I have run across reports of certain Tier One special operations units inviting world-class competition shooters to train with them in an effort to wring out any kernels of knowledge for running a handgun more efficiently and ruthlessly in close-quarters environments.

One key element separating the Marauder from competitors, both steel-framed 1911s and polymer double-action-only (DAO) handguns, is STI's patented 2011 frame. When the first STI 2011 pistol arrived in 1994, it offered a unique twist on the 1911 in being the only high-capacity 1911 design featuring a modular two-piece bottom end consisting of a steel subframe and a detachable polymer grip. The STI Marauder benefits from continued tweaking and refining of the 2011 concept since 1994 based on customer feedback and product development. The Marauder offers the benefits of STI's modular design in a model featuring 17, 20 or 26 rounds of 9mm, depending on what the customer desires to satisfy mission/competition requirements. The Marauder I tested arrived with one 20-round magazine.

As mentioned, the Marauder is built on STI's 2011 platform, which features a frame made of hardened 4140 steel. The steel frame contains the slide rails, the fire control mechanism, the thumb and grip safeties, the slide stop and the railed dust cover. Lights, lasers and other accessories are only getting more popular and accepted on a handgun, especially ones that offer carbine-like capacity like the STI Marauder. The steel frame serves as the bed for the barrel.



The front of the slide features a Dawson fiber-optic front sight for fast target acquisitions as well as forward-angled slide serrations.

The trigger pull is factory set for a nominal weight of 4.5 pounds. STI's performance-enhancing features include an oversized, ambidextrous thumb safety; a bobbed, high-swept beavertail grip safety with a palm pad; and an extended combat ejector. The Marauder's grip is made of a proprietary glass-filled polymer with molded checkered side panels. STI sagely decided to keep the 17-degree grip angle that the 1911 platform is renowned for. Also, 30-lpi checkering on the frontstrap and flat polymer mainspring housing, along with 25-lpi checkering on the squared-off triggerguard, provides the user with a secure grip. A nuance of the polymer grip construction is a relatively thin frontstrap and side walls, with a width of 1.28 inches and a front-to-back measurement of 2.1 inches, while the circumference is 5.69 inches. These measurements are comparable to a typical single-stack 1911 while offering over twice the capacity. The Marauder's slide is CNC-machined, heat-treated 4140 steel. The STI slide features angled rear slide serrations and a lowered/

The steel 2011 frame features a dust cover rail, making it easy for operators to mount lights, lasers or other accessories. Also note the checkered face of the triggerguard.

Seve Woods Photos

PRIMED FOR VICTORY

Competition 1911s ready to go right out of the box!



Kimber Team Match II: The Team Match II is Kimber's top-of-the-line competition 1911. It is chambered in .45 ACP as well as 9mm. The Team Match II was created to the USA Shooting Rapid Fire Pistol team's specifications for their use in competition. (kimberamerica.com; 888-243-4522)



Dan Wesson Elite Series Chaos: The Dan Wesson Elite Series of pistols were joined by the Chaos in 2014. The Dan Wesson Chaos is a high-capacity 9mm 1911 with a 21+1 capacity. The Chaos comes from the DW Custom Shop with a match trigger and fiber-optic sights. Serious 3-Gun competitors will find it ideal for use. (cz-usa.com; 800-955-4486)



Sig Sauer 1911 Target: Sig Sauer's 1911 Target arrives out of the box with a match-grade barrel and trigger. It is chambered in .45 ACP. Adjustable sights come standard, and stainless and black Nitron finishes are available. (sigsauer.com; 866-345-6744)



Para Pro Custom 14.45: Para teamed with IPSC World Champion Travis Tomasie to create the Pro Custom 14.45. It is ready to compete straight from the box with two 14-round magazines along with a match-grade barrel and trigger. It is chambered in .45 ACP. (para-usa.com; 888-999-9386)



STI Edge: The Edge is an early STI 2011 frame introduction (1997) that quickly became a fixture among IPSC competitors as well as tactical teams. It is offered in 9mm, .38 Super, .40 S&W and .45 ACP. (stiguns.com; 512-819-0656)



Colt Gold Cup: The Colt Gold Cup is the original out-of-the-box competition 1911. The first Colt Gold Cup pistol was introduced in the late 1950s to give competitive shooters a gun to take directly from the dealer's showcase to the firing line. The Gold Cup established what makes up a competition .45 ACP 1911 in terms of an adjustable trigger, match barrel and adjustable target sights. (colt.com; 800-962-2658)



Springfield TRP SS: The Springfield Armory TRP SS starts with a forged National Match frame and slide. These are precision fit and then mated with a match grade stainless steel barrel and bushing. The 3-dot tritium sights and an extended beveled magazine well remind you that the TRP was designed for use in high stress environments. (springfield-armory.com; 800-680-6866)



Les Baer 1911 Boss: Les Baer 1911s are renowned for their accuracy. The 1911 Boss continues this with a guarantee for 3-inch groups at 50 yards. The Boss comes with rear cocking serrations, a fiber-optic front sight, an extended safety and 30-lpi checkering. (lesbaer.com; 563-289-2126)

flared ejection port. A nice attention-to-detail touch is that the slide and steel frame are thoroughly dehorned, and all of the pistol's metal components have a Cerakote finish.

CLASSIC REBORN

Many debate the advantages of steel versus polymer, as well as caliber choices. This article is not getting into either debate. A case can be made that the STI Marauder bridges all of these polarizing issues—cartridge and frame make. The STI Marauder chambered in 9mm weighs in at 41 ounces with an empty magazine. A 5-inch, stainless steel barrel with an integral feed ramp contributes to an overall length of 8.5 inches.

One immediate concern any time a double-stack magazine is utilized is how it effects grip and trigger manipulation. One of the inherent advantages of the 1911 platform is how it feels in hand, and the Marauder's STI 2011 frame does not sacrifice this in its quest for capacity. My hands are average size, yet they have no issue working the trigger or other controls on the STI Marauder.

An obvious aesthetic standout on the Marauder is the oversized magazine funnel on the bottom of the grip frame. While many may question the addition of such a device on a potential carry gun, I did not find it obtrusive, as it was an enhancement to faster magazine changes as intended. If others differ in their opinion, the magazine funnel can be removed. The STI Marauder represents portability, capacity, reliability, controllability and lethality. These are poster-child traits for a personal-defense handgun. No one can argue that there is a more instinctive-handling weapon as the 1911-style handgun. The trigger and grip size/angle cause it to be the most accurate handgun in most arsenals. Why do you think hostage-rescue units and other special-purpose military/LE teams use it? It is accurate and conducive to precise shot placement.

Note the Marauder's TAS rear sight, which is serrated to reduce glare (above left), and magazine well funnel (below), for faster reloads.

RANGE REPORT

I evaluated the 9mm Marauder using Winchester, Black Hills, Hornady and Federal American Eagle ammunition. The selected 9mm loads ranged from 115 grains to 147 grains, with both hollow points (HPs) and FMJ bullet types. I fired approximately 550 rounds while compiling this article. I also used an ammunition can full of an assortment of steel-, aluminum- and brass-cased 9mm loads that were consolidated from partially used boxes. I stuffed magazines with these random loads and used them for a majority of the range time.

First I tested the STI Marauder by verifying that the sights were zeroed and then firing several magazines rapidly at various steel "man" targets. This quickly shows if any reliability issues exist. Honestly, if a defensive pistol is not at the very least reliable, what good is it? Further testing consisted of strings of fire against steel



PERFORMANCE

STI MARAUDER 9MM

LOAD	VELOCITY	ACCURACY
Federal 124 Hydra-Shok	1,105	1.50
Federal American Eagle 124 FMJ	1,122	1.66
Black Hills 115 JHP EXP	1,130	1.80
Hornady Steel Match 125 HAP	1,095	1.75

Bullet weight measured in grains, velocity in fps by chronograph and accuracy in inches for best five-shot groups at 25 yards.



plate racks and popper targets at 7, 15 and 25 yards. The sights were zeroed out of the box for 25 yards using the classic six o'clock hold. The advantages of the single-action trigger were quickly evident during the bench testing, where accuracy was the goal with its compact, minimal-creep pull. Groups fired from standing or kneeling positions were impressive, with bullets unerringly hitting their mark. Rapid-fire magazine dumps still found rounds clustered in the A-zone of an IPSC target. I couldn't resist bench-testing the pistol after witnessing the unsupported accuracy results. Sub-2-inch groups at 25 yard were not unusual. The Marauder's Dawson fiber-optic front sight and STI TAS rear sight tracked smoothly during recoil when firing multiple rounds.

Next I decided to evaluate the Marauder using drills I learned during training at firearms schools such as Suarez International, Tactical Response, TMACS, etc. The natural pointability of the STI Marauder was confirmed, along with its ability to quickly get into action. Drills included working around vehicles and CQB activities typified by experiences encountered in shoothouse environments.

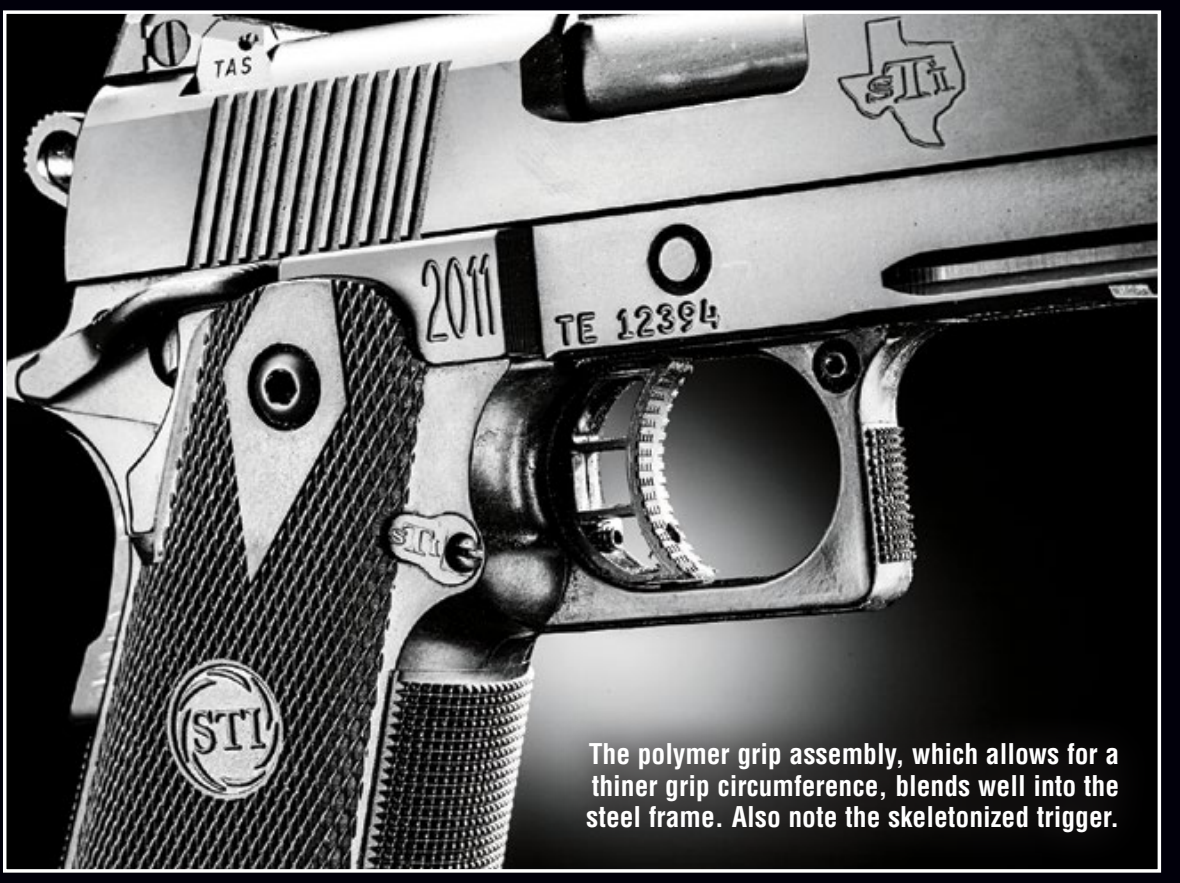
PRO GRADE

A premium is placed on a quick-handling, accurate handgun such as the Marauder, with multiple rounds fired in quick succession being the norm to put a target down. The beavertail frame settles the weapon naturally into your hand and provides a point of reference when drawing the pistol from a holster. The Marauder proved very capable of firing multiple-shot strings with the utmost accuracy thanks its short trigger pull and reset. As a side note, it was surprising to find a number of holsters that accommodated the STI Marauder, including both inside-the-waistband (IWB) and belt models.



STI outfits the Marauder with large, easy-to-reach controls that are dehorned to prevent snagging during the draw or while firing.

The STI Marauder performed at a level justifying STI's hard-earned reputation. Successful handgun designs constantly evolve. This is for a variety of reasons stemming mainly from market and technological impulses/pressures magnified by the end-user's ever-changing mission requirements. The STI Marauder is the poster child of this design-modification creep involving the classic 1911. Based on the above, I believe the STI Marauder is a valid choice for real-world use and not merely a competition weapon attempting crossover appeal in the tactical arena. For more information, visit stiguns.com or call 512-819-0656. **1911**



The polymer grip assembly, which allows for a thiner grip circumference, blends well into the steel frame. Also note the skeletonized trigger.

Seve Woods Photos

R1 + Ti-RANT



Remington and AAC join forces to offer one dynamic pistol kit!

BY **ANDY MASSIMILIAN** • PHOTOS BY **RICHARD KING**

After about 70 years since its last 1911 was made in Ilion, New York, Remington Arms restarted production of the classic 1911 about four years ago. Since then, the Remington 1911 line, all of which is made at the company's Ilion location, has grown to include five models, including the most specialized model—the 1911 R1 Enhanced Threaded Barrel. It should be noted that in the spring of 2014, Remington announced that its 1911 production would be moved to its new facility in Alabama.

The pistol tested for this article is a branded, limited edition R1 made for AAC. AAC is one of a stable of firearms and accessory companies owned by Remington Outdoor Company, which also owns the Remington, Bushmaster, Para USA and Marlin brands. The AAC 1911 is nearly identical to the 1911 R1 Enhanced Threaded Barrel model. However, the grips and markings are distinct from the Remington variant. The AAC 1911 has gray VZ "Grenade" AAC logo grips, and the slide is prominently laser engraved with "Advanced Armament Corp" on the left and has a light etching of the AAC "skull and crossed guns" logo on the right. The AAC 1911 comes in a Pelican plastic case with a custom-cut foam interior to fit the pistol, suppressor, extra magazines and tools.

The AAC 1911 is AAC's second branded pistol, following a 1911 made several years ago by Nighthawk Custom. That pistol was a very high-quality custom gun with a much higher MSRP, while the current offering is more affordable but still has features that appeal to suppressor users.

The AAC 1911 and Ti-RANT suppressor are only available as a complete package sold by distributor AccuSport to Class 3 dealers. AccuSport explains that this is the first time that a pistol and suppressor have been sold together, and it will likely appeal to the collector market.

DIGGING DEEPER

The AAC 1911 is a full-sized pistol made from a forged carbon steel slide and cast frame. As mentioned, it ships in a foam-lined case with slots custom-cut for the pistol, magazines, cleaning rod and AAC Ti-RANT suppressor.

The AAC 1911 locking system is the conventional Browning design that uses a swinging link to attach the barrel block to the pistol's frame via the slide stop pin and the standard GI re-



The AAC 1911, a Remington R1 Enhanced Threaded Barrel branded with AAC's markings and grips, comes with a Ti-RANT suppressor.

= QUIET .45





With AAC's Ti-RANT installed, the covert .45's overall length comes to 17.5 inches.

coil spring guide rod that allows disassembly without tools.

Like all Remington 1911 pistols, the AAC 1911 incorporates what many call the "Series 80" firing pin safety, named after what Colt referred to this system as when it first was released. The Series 80 system incorporates a spring-loaded plunger into the slide that prevents the firing pin from moving forward unless the trigger is depressed. The design allows pistols to be carried with a round in the chamber, because dropping the pistol on its muzzle would not move the firing pin forward to strike the primer. The original 1911 design lacked this feature, as do other current production models that use other drop-safe designs.

Most 1911 pistols sold today have many features (extended beavertail grip safety, lowered/flared ejection port, skeletonized trigger, lightened hammer for a faster lock time, etc.) that two decades ago would have been considered customization. The AAC 1911, however, has all of these and adds some additional touches that have real value for the shooter, especially when running a suppressor.

SPECIFICATIONS

AAC REMINGTON 1911 R1 W/TI-RANT

CALIBER	.45 ACP
BARREL	5 inches
OA LENGTH	9 inches (17.5 w/suppressor)
WEIGHT	42 ounces (empty)
GRIPS	G10
SIGHTS	Blade front, dovetailed rear
ACTION	SA
FINISH	Satin black oxide
CAPACITY	8+1
MSRP	$2,261

The fixed sights are high profile to allow a sight picture with the front sight just barely clearing the edge of the Ti-RANT suppressor. These sights are high quality, durable and made of steel with fine horizontal serrations on the rear edges to reduce glare and lend a crisp image to the shooter. They also have a single white dot on the front and a smaller dot just under the notch on the rear to make them easier to see and align to deliver a quick shot. Unlike many rear sights, there are no sharp edges to cut your hands. The best feature is the shape of the rear sight, which acts as a cocking ledge should an injured operator need to rack the slide one-handed by hooking the sight onto a holster, belt buckle or boot. Adjustment for windage is done by loosening a set-screw and drifting the rear sight in its dovetail.



GET A GRIP

A lot of care has been taken to give the shooter a very secure grip on the AAC 1911. The G10 grips have aggressive checker-

The tall front and rear sights have white dots that shooters simply line up into a "figure eight."



THE SILENT Ti-RANT .45

AAC's Ti-RANT .45 is the company's most advanced and most effective pistol suppressor. This suppressor has a stated sound reduction of 30 and 41 decibels when used dry and wet, respectively, which can make the sound signature of a .45 ACP pistol 125 decibels.

MEET THE Ti-RANT: The Ti-RANT is made to withstand heavy use yet still be lightweight. It is constructed using Grade 9 titanium for the housing, 17-4pH stainless steel for the blast baffle and piston assembly and hardcoat anodized 7075-T6 aluminum for the secondary baffles. The design uses nine tightly fitted, tabbed-together "K" baffles contained in a 1.38-inch-diameter concentric tube. Though K baffles are not a new design, AAC uses a different baffle face to improve sound reduction. The blast baffle, which bears the brunt of the heat, pressure and scouring from burning gunpowder, is treated with a proprietary nitride finish for improved heat resistance. The unit is 8.74 inches long and weighs 11.5 ounces. When used on the AAC 1911 pistol, the system is 17.25 inches long and weighs 3.3 pounds unloaded.

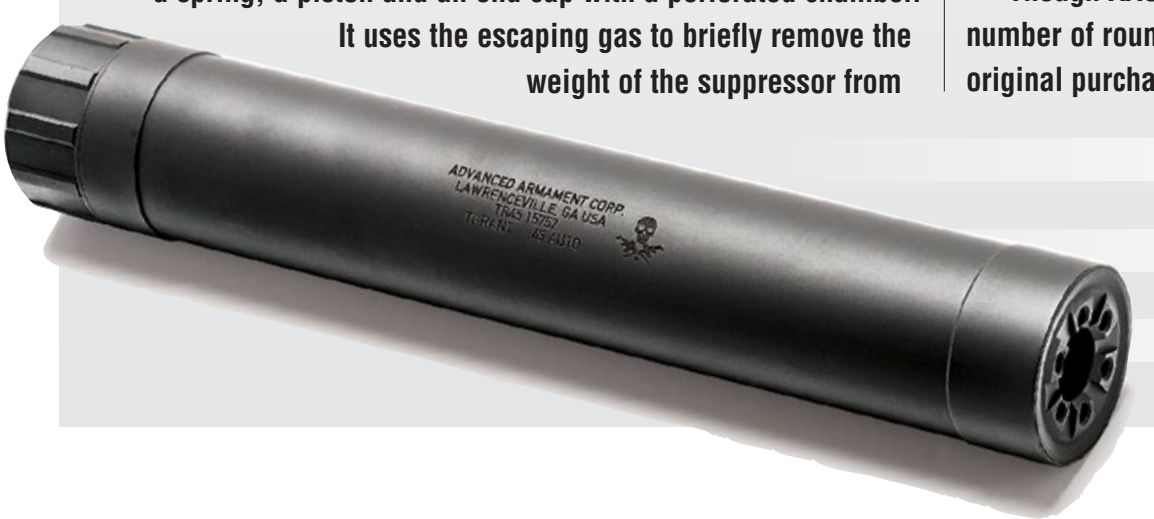
The Ti-RANT was originally made as a sealed unit, but at the request of commercial users, Ti-RANTs now can be fully disassembled for cleaning using a spanner wrench supplied with the suppressor. The Ti-RANT also comes with a belt pouch made from multi-cam camouflage nylon.

ASAP BOOST: The Ti-RANT uses Advanced Armament's ASAP booster system to allow semi-automatic operation from handguns that do not have fixed barrels. Booster systems overcome the added weight and leverage applied to the barrel by the suppressor that would otherwise reduce slide velocity and cause stoppages. The ASAP is comprised of three stainless steel parts: a spring, a piston and an end cap with a perforated chamber. It uses the escaping gas to briefly remove the weight of the suppressor from the barrel. Escaping gas enters a chamber where it pushes the baffle stack and housing forward, while simultaneously pushing a spring-loaded piston rearward against the barrel. The forward motion removes the mass of the suppressor from the barrel just long enough for the slide to unlock from the barrel, and the unlocking is assisted by the rearward movement of the piston, which is attached to the muzzle. Though the Ti-RANT is designed for pistols without a fixed barrel, it can be used with fixed-barrel firearms. The ASAP booster must be locked out by replacing the spring with a spacer that prevents the unit from slamming into the muzzle with every shot fired.

POINT OF IMPACT: Suppressors often change the point of impact compared with the same weapon unsuppressed. This is because the added weight changes the recoil impulse and barrel harmonics, though the latter factor is much more significant in rifles. Thus, a pistol that groups 2 inches on target will likely print 2 inches but in a different location with a suppressor installed. Adjusting the sights can bring groups back to zero, but operators can't be tinkering with sights on a mission whenever the tactical situation dictates attaching a suppressor. The ASAP design partially solves the problem by allowing the suppressor to be rotated to minimize the shift in the point of impact after it is attached. To move the point of impact, grasp the unloaded pistol and pull the Ti-RANT forward and rotate it to any of 10 positions that correspond to the sprockets on the ASAP piston.

The Ti-RANT is designed to completely eliminate muzzle flash, which is a critical feature with tactical uses at night time. Hotter loads that run close to supersonic speed, however, may create some muzzle flash.

Though AAC could not specify the service life in maximum number of rounds, the Ti-RANT has a lifetime warranty for the original purchaser. ***—Andy Massimilian***



SPECIFICATIONS: AAC TI-RANT .45

CALIBER	.45 ACP
OA LENGTH	11.74 inches
WEIGHT	11.5 ounces
SOUND REDUCTION:	-30/-41 decibels (dry/wet)
MSRP	$850

PERFORMANCE

AAC REMINGTON 1911 R1 W/TI-RANT SUPPRESSOR

LOAD	VELOCITY	ACCURACY
Hornady 200 JHP	907	0.98
Remington 230 FMJ	814	0.94
Winchester 230 FMJ	748	2.19

Bullet weight measured in grains, velocity in fps by chronograph and accuracy in inches for best five-shot groups at 25 yards.



ing and both the flat steel mainspring housing and the "memory bump" on the extended grip safety have 20-lpi checkering. The frontstrap has vertical serrations. It is nice to see that Remington has retained a steel mainspring housing. The forged carbon steel slide has front serrations for doing a press chamber check. Both the front and rear slide serrations are distinct enough to get a grip but do not feel too sharp.

Because the grips are thicker than on many 1911 designs, the controls are slightly modified over standard dimensions to increase this pistol's ergonomics. The magazine release is longer while the safety lever is wider and better shaped to allow the shooter easy access and manipulation.

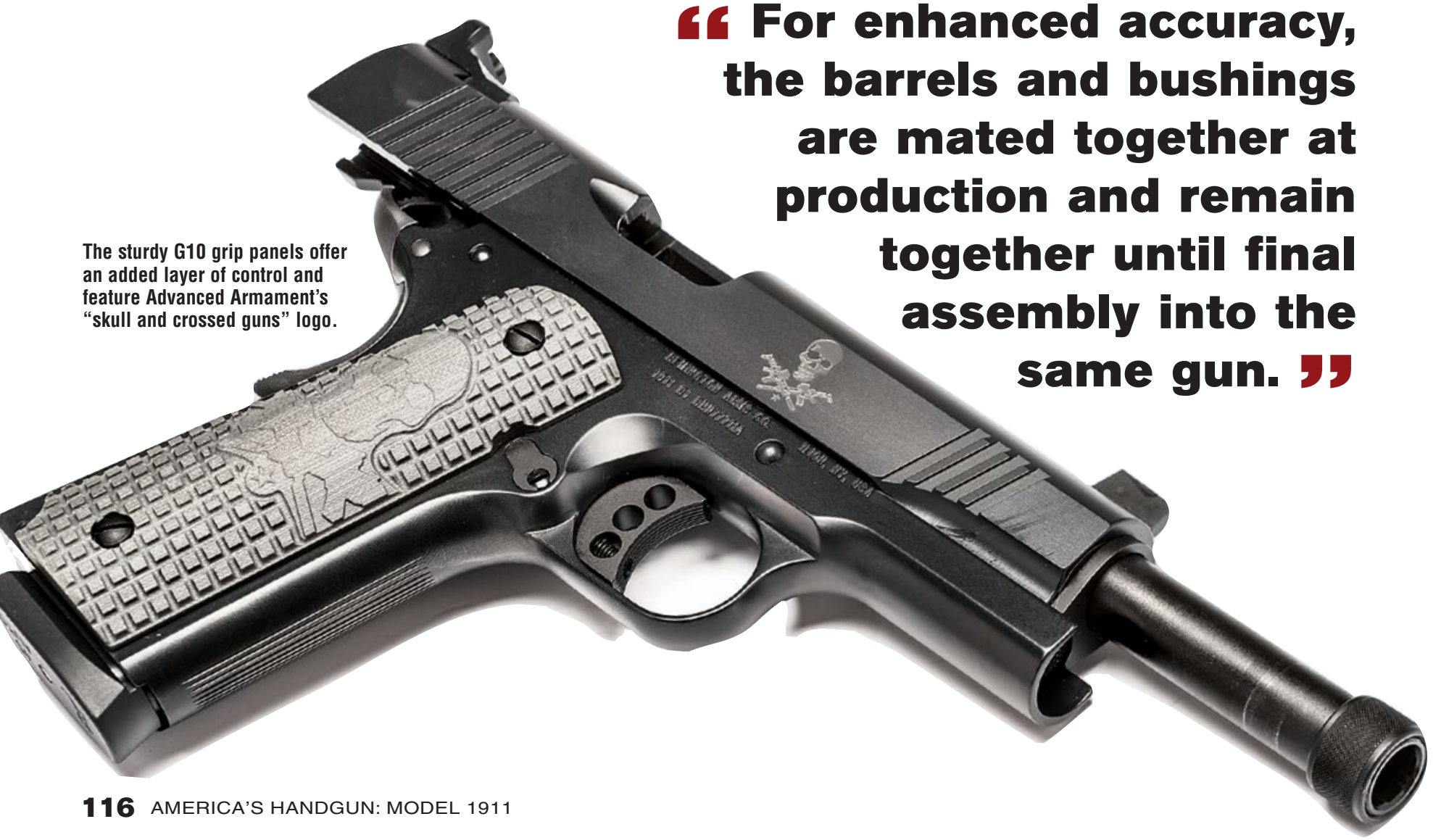
The AAC 1911 has a lightened, skeletonized, medium-length trigger that has a screw to adjust its overtravel. To keep the pistol stealthy, the stainless trigger has been treated with black oxide.

The eight-round magazines have extended floorplates that act as bumper pads. Anyone who has used a 1911 more than casually can attest to the value of a bumper pad compared to a flush-fit magazine design to ensure the magazine is fully inserted, especially during a speed reload.

The AAC 1911 also has a match-grade, blackened stainless steel barrel with .578-28 threading and treated with a black oxide finish. For enhanced accuracy, the barrels and bushings are mated together at production and remain together until final assembly into the same gun. A thread protector is also included to preserve the fine threads from damage.

I tested the pistol's accuracy using a Caldwell rest at 25 yards, which is our testing protocol for full-size pistols. The AAC 1911 shot very well, with the average size of all groups measuring well under 3 inches. It's been my experience that Remington firearms tend to shoot most accurate-

"For enhanced accuracy, the barrels and bushings are mated together at production and remain together until final assembly into the same gun."



The sturdy G10 grip panels offer an added layer of control and feature Advanced Armament's "skull and crossed guns" logo.



The lightweight, skeletonized trigger, also given a stealthy black oxide finish, is adjustable for overtravel.

ly using Remington ammo, and the AAC 1911 was no exception to the rule. The best single groups of 0.94 inches and 0.98 inches were shot using Remington 230-grain full metal jacket (FMJ) and Hornady 200-grain jacketed-hollow-point (JHP) loads, respectively, measured at the centers of all shots. The average group size of the Remington ammo was a very respectable 1.75 inches.

The handling qualities were enhanced by the aggressively textured grips, and the bumper pads on the magazine floorplates made reloading much more certain than using magazines without them.

The also tested the AAC 1911 with the Ti-RANT suppressor. At 8.74 inches long, the Ti-RANT is a full-sized suppressor that makes the entire unit 17.25 inches long. The AAC 1911 worked flawlessly with the Ti-RANT, and with a 4-inch shift in point of impact at 25 yards. There was no discernable muzzle flash and the sound reduction was very apparent using the suppressor dry or wet with 5cc's of water poured into the front of the suppressor. AAC states that the average dry/wet sound reduction of the Ti-RANT is 30/41 decibels.

The sights worked very well and





“ The AAC 1911 is a full-size pistol made from a forged carbon steel slide and cast frame. ”

were easy to pick up, and they did not distract me from maintaining a clear front-sight focus when used without a suppressor.

Using a pistol equipped with a suppressor almost always leads to a compromise in the sight picture because the sights are not high enough to clear the edge of the can. Though the sights on the AAC 1911 are high profile, the Ti-RANT’s 1.38-inch diameter still occludes some of the sight blades. Replacing the rear sight with a Leopold Delta-Point reflex sight helped me acquire targets in rapid fashion, as it gives a single aiming point higher than the front sight and high enough to clear the suppressor. Aiming points are either a 7.5-MOA triangle or a 3.5-MOA round dot. I prefer the triangle since the upper point makes a smaller, more precise aiming point. This unit comes with adapters to mount onto a variety of pistols.



The AAC 1911’s front and rear slide serrations are easy to grasp for manipulations without being too sharp or prone to snagging.

FINAL NOTES

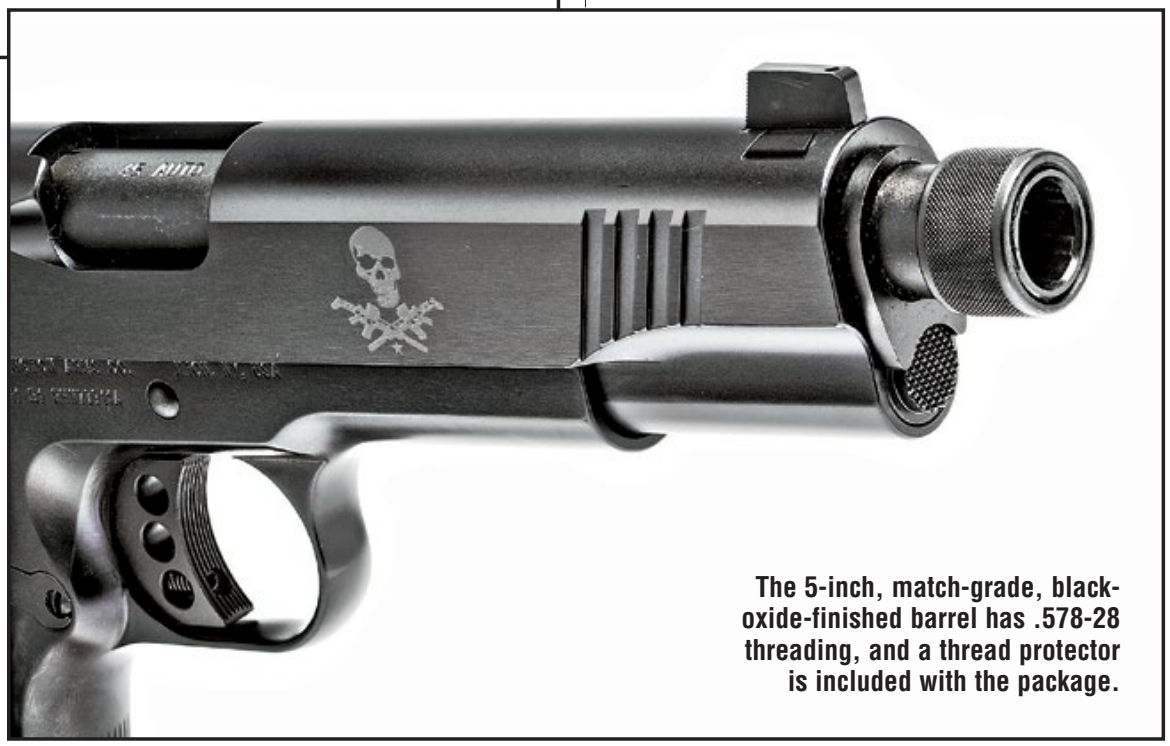
The AAC 1911 is both a collectible piece and a very good shooter. It is one of only a few pistols that come from the factory equipped with a cocking ledge rear sight that will set you back about a $100 if added later. This feature is something that I would recommend for any tactical pistol. The AAC 1911 may be hard to find given its limited production, but the nearly identical Remington Enhanced Threaded Barrel 1911 is currently produced. **1911**

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Advanced Armament Corp.
770-925-9988
advanced-armament.com

Remington
800-243-9700
remington.com

Leupold
800-538-7653
leupold.com



The 5-inch, match-grade, black-oxide-finished barrel has .578-28 threading, and a thread protector is included with the package.



AMERICAN LEGEND ★GRIPS★

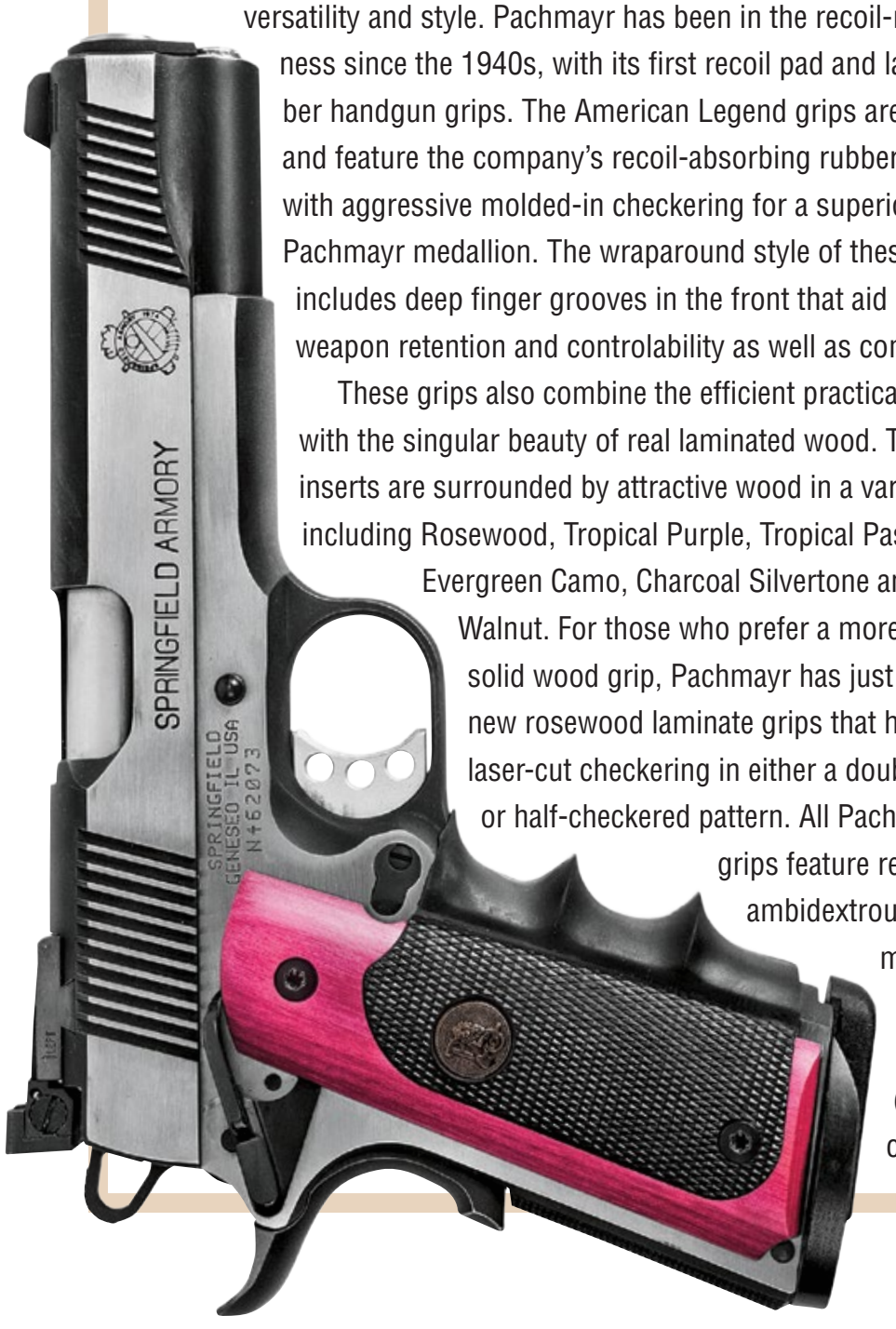
Enhance the look and handling of your favorite 1911!

BY **JORGE AMSELLE** • PHOTOS COURTESY **PACHMAYR**

Some things will never go out of style. The 1911 pistol is an icon that was destined to become a classic from the start, and today it is still incredibly popular, with more companies producing more models every day. The easiest and most popular upgrade anyone can make to change the look and feel of their 1911 is to change the grips, which can also add a dash of personalization at the same time.

The American Legend Grips from Pachmayr offer a very high degree of versatility and style. Pachmayr has been in the recoil-reduction business since the 1940s, with its first recoil pad and later with rubber handgun grips. The American Legend grips are no exception and feature the company's recoil-absorbing rubber side panels with aggressive molded-in checkering for a superior grip and the Pachmayr medallion. The wraparound style of these grips also includes deep finger grooves in the front that aid significantly in weapon retention and controlability as well as comfort.

These grips also combine the efficient practicality of rubber with the singular beauty of real laminated wood. The rubber inserts are surrounded by attractive wood in a variety of colors, including Rosewood, Tropical Purple, Tropical Passionwood, Evergreen Camo, Charcoal Silvertone and Heritage Walnut. For those who prefer a more traditional solid wood grip, Pachmayr has just introduced new rosewood laminate grips that have precise laser-cut checkering in either a double-diamond or half-checkered pattern. All Pachmayr 1911 grips feature relief cuts for ambidextrous safeties and mainspring housing pin cut-outs. (pachmayr.com). **1911**



AMERICA'S HANDGUN MODEL 1911 WEB DIRECTORY

2ND AMENDMENT MEDIA
redbookofguns.com

ALIEN GEAR HOLSTERS
aliengearholsters.com

BRAVO COMPANY USA
bravocompanyusa.com

BREAKTHROUGH CLEAN
breakthroughclean.com

CZ-USA
cz-usa.com

COMFORT HOLSTERS
comfortholsters.com

DESANTIS
desantisholster.com

GUNCRAFTER INDUSTRIES
guncrafterindustries.com

LES BAER CUSTOM
lesbaer.com

LYMAN
lymanproducts.com

MAXSELL
maxarmory.com

NORTH AMERICAN ARMS
northamericanarms.com

QUICK FIRE CASES
quickfirecases.com

PANTEAO PRODUCTIONS
makeready.tv

PERSONAL DEFENESE WORLD™
personaldefenseworld.com

PRESENT ARMS
presentarmsinc.com

REPUBLIC FORGE
republicforge.com

RESCO INSTRUMENTS
rescoinstruments.com

ROCK RIVER ARMS
rockriverarms.com

SCCY
sccy.com

STI INTERNATIONAL
stiguns.com

VOLKMANN PRECISION
volkmannprecision.com

VZ GRIPS
vzgrips.com

WALTHER ARMS
waltherarms.com

WILSON COMBAT
wilsoncombat.com

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NIGHTHAWK



T4 9MM

Ultra-thin 1911 delivers with covert carry dimensions and 8+1 rounds on tap!

BY **DOUG LARSON**

The 1911 design has been around a very long time and continues to be one of the most popular among all handguns currently produced.

It just seems to fit most people's hands and, partially because of the single-action trigger system, is easy to shoot accurately. In contrast to the age of the 1911, Nighthawk Custom of Berryville, Arkansas, is a youngster. But the company is refining the 1911 design in ways that must appeal to many shooters, because demand for its products is strong. And it's no surprise—the guns are well made.

A recent addition to Nighthawk's catalog is the T4, which is available with a steel or aluminum frame. I received the steel-framed T4 for testing. Yes, it is another 1911, but it's different in several ways from

Nighthawk's slim 9mm T4 was built for concealed carry with many high-end features for lifesaving accuracy and reliability.

Gunsite Photo

the .45 caliber, slab-sided companion that many shooters know and love.

GUN DETAILS

The Nighthawk T4 is made for self-defense and is meant to be carried every day. It's not a lightweight gun—it has a comforting 34.3 ounces of heft—but that weight helps to absorb the recoil of the 9mm cartridges it fires. Now, for all of you who don't think a defensive handgun chambered in anything less than .40 caliber is worth considering, you may be surprised that some seasoned law enforcement officers—ones that are real gunfighters who have defended their lives with a handgun—are switching from larger-caliber guns to 9mms. One of the reasons for that is the quality of self-defense ammunition that is now available in 9mm. The days when all you could get were full metal jacket or run-of-the-mill hollow-point projectiles that were of marginal value are over. Today, after much scientific analysis and first-class engineering, quality 9mm handgun bullets expand reliably and penetrate far enough to cause real fight-stopping damage to bad guys. And because 9mm cartridges are smaller, more rounds can be carried on board, a feature that could save a life by lessening the chance that a reload will be necessary in the middle of a gunfight.

Another characteristic of the 9mm compared to a .45 ACP or .40 S&W round is that it recoils less, making it easier to get back on target for a quick follow-up shot. Look, contrary to what Hollywood or the ill-informed media thinks, handgun rounds just aren't very good fight-stoppers. So, multiple hits are often needed to make a bad guy decide to stop trying to kill you. That's why quick follow-up shots are so important.

But back to the gun. The T4 is smaller than the standard 1911, and that makes it easier to carry discreetly. The barrel length is only

SPECIFICATIONS

NIGHTHAWK T4

CALIBER	9mm
BARREL	3.8 inches
OA LENGTH	7.38 inches
WEIGHT	34.3 ounces (empty)
GRIPS	VZ Alien
SIGHTS	Heinie Slant Pro Straight Eight
ACTION	SA
FINISH	Black nitride
CAPACITY	8+1
MSRP	$3,595



A quality 1911 deserves a quality holster. It has to keep the gun in place until you need it, and Nighthawk Custom's Quick Reaction holster does just that.





The Nighthawk T4 is much smaller than a standard 1911. Its grip frame is thinner but still holds eight 9mm rounds in the magazine.

3.8 inches, which is shorter than the 5-inch standard length or even the 4.25-inch length of a Commander-sized gun. But the grip still extends about 2.25 inches below the triggerguard so all three fingers of most users have something to hold onto. That also means the gun's magazine will hold eight rounds. With one in the chamber, that's nine rounds before a reload is required. While not as many rounds as a double-stack gun, it is still more than most small pistols hold, and it's slim, making it less likely to create a bulge under clothing, which can give away the fact that you're carrying a gun.

"With its all-steel construction, slim grip and 9mm loads, the gun was very comfortable to shoot."

Thin is in—or at least it is popular for carry these days. So, Nighthawk thinned the gun down more than a standard 1911. While most 1911s have a grip width of around 1.25 inches, the T4 width is about 0.1 inches less. That's due to the Micarta, thin-profile Alien grips that are made by VZ Grips. They have an aggressive texture for a very good, slip-resistant



To take the T4 down, you must compress the recoil spring on the Bob Marvel Everlast Recoil System, which can be held together with a paper clip.





The T4 sports Heinie Slant Pro Straight Eight night sights, and the slide is cut thinner near the muzzle for easier press checks and reholstering.

surface, but are not so rough to be uncomfortable to hold for extended shooting sessions. The mainspring housing is flat, both lengthwise and from side to side, which contributes to making the grip frame about 0.1 inches less in size than a standard 1911's when measured from front to back. Those smaller dimensions don't sound like much, but they are very noticeable when the gun is held. Most people seem to like the feel and find it makes holding onto the gun under recoil easier.

The mainspring housing has very fine, nicely executed horizontal serrations, and the frontstrap is checkered for slip resistance. If you clamp your hand down on this gun, it wants to stay in place.

The grip safety on the T4 is a beavertail design with a memory bump to help make sure it is fully depressed

PERFORMANCE

NIGHTHAWK T4 9MM

LOAD	VELOCITY	ACCURACY
Black Hills 124 JHP	1,151	1.59
Federal 124 Hydra-Shok JHP	1,053	0.91
Hornady 135 Critical Duty JHP	963	1.19

Bullet weight measured in grains, velocity in fps by chronograph, and accuracy in inches for best five-shot groups at 15 yards.



when a high-thumb hold is applied. And the grip safety, like all the other major parts of this gun, is machined from a solid billet. No cast or metal-injection-molded parts are used. Nighthawk really is focused on quality.

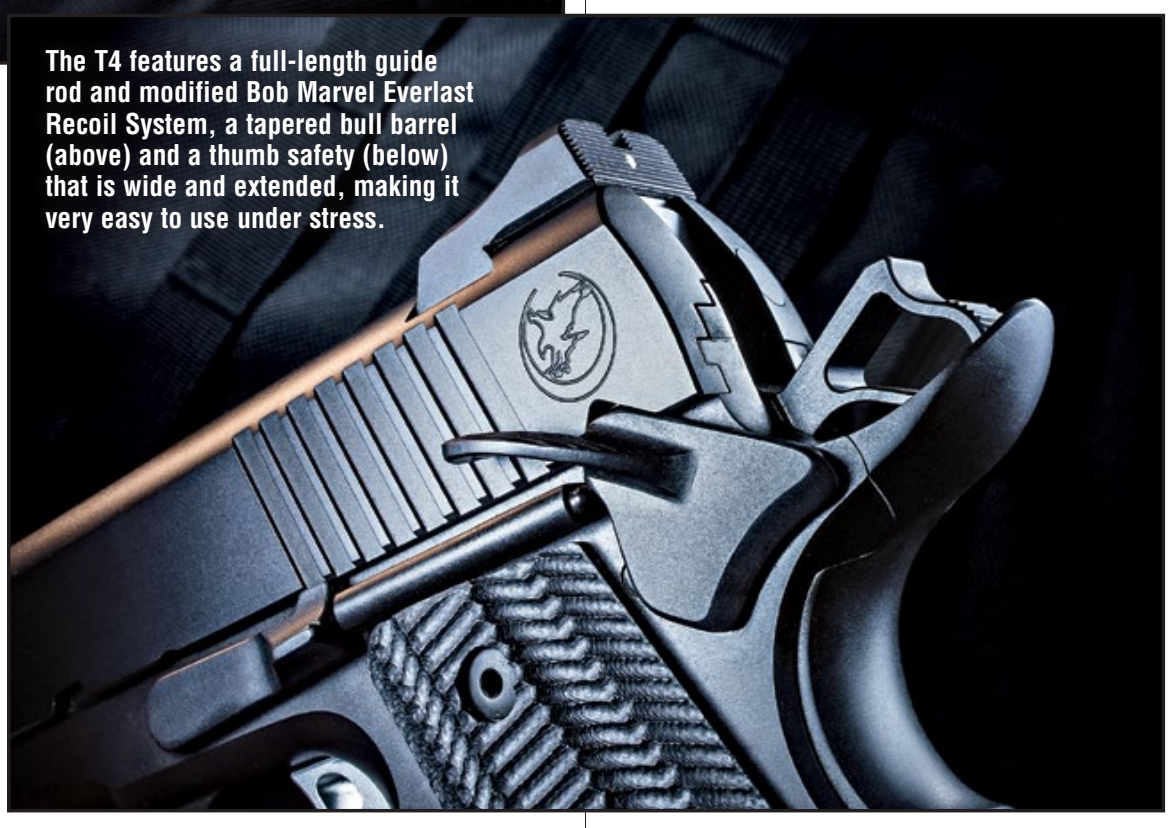
HANDS ON

The extended thumb safety worked fine and has a wide ledge for easy manipulation. The Nighthawk slide catch, however, is a bit different than many of its competitors' because of its slightly wider ledge, which makes it easier to activate. And the end of the slide catch shaft, which is normally rounded and protrudes from the right side of the gun, is flat on the T4. It looks nice. Another difference from other slide catches is a small groove that engages the spring-loaded plunger pin. It makes it possible to push the stop straight in during assembly instead of at an angle. This little modification reduces the possibility that the frame will be scratched when the slide stop is installed. It's a small modification, but a pretty good one, and it makes assembly just a bit easier.

The magazine release is checkered and extends a bit further out from the side of the frame than a standard release. That makes activation more positive. When pressed, the Wilson Combat stainless steel magazines with steel baseplates dropped freely from the beveled magazine well—just like they are supposed to. The magazines have polymer followers and a polymer spacer along the rear to position the







The T4 features a full-length guide rod and modified Bob Marvel Everlast Recoil System, a tapered bull barrel (above) and a thumb safety (below) that is wide and extended, making it very easy to use under stress.

shorter 9mm cartridges correctly for feeding. They worked just fine.

Nighthawk has installed a skeletonized aluminum trigger that on my test gun was adjusted to break at just less than 4 pounds after a little bit of take-up. There was some overtravel, but its reset was distinct. It's a very nice trigger. The hammer is skeletonized with serrations in case the user wants to cock the hammer manually.

The T4's slide is a bit different. The overall length of the gun is 7.38 inches, and the slide is 6.25 inches long, so this is not an Officer- or Commander-sized gun. Whatever you want to call it, the size makes it easier than a full-sized gun to carry. The slide is heavily serrated on the sides near the rear to provide a good grip for cycling, and the ejection port is lowered and flared. But for about the first 0.75 inches up front, the slide is narrowed by about 0.1 inches, creating a ledge to get a grip on the slide for a press check if that's the way the shooter prefers to see if there is a round in the chamber. It also looks good and aids in reholstering. The frame and slide are finished with extremely hard and durable black nitride.

Atop the slide reside Heinie Slant Pro Straight Eight sights that are filled with tritium to make them glow in the dark. Some people really like these sights because, to align them, the dot in the front is placed above the dot in the rear, sort of like a figure eight. They find it faster to align than the traditional three-dot arrangement. In any case, the sights are drift adjustable, and the rear is held in place with a setscrew. The backside of the rear sight is also finely serrated to reduce the possibility of glare, which can affect the ability of the shooter to get a good sight picture through the square notch.

The heavy bull barrel has no bushing. Where many of these types of barrels have a symmetrical cone at the front to lock up with the front of the slide when the gun is in battery, this barrel is straight along the bottom and tapered along the top. Nighthawk says this reduces barrel vibration during the firing cycle because the bottom of the barrel remains in contact with the slide. The front of the barrel is cut flush with the front of the slide, and the crown is recessed nicely to prevent accuracy-

"It was easy to get back on target for fast follow-up shots, and in tactical drills the gun was a natural."

robbing damage. The feed ramp on the other end of the barrel is integral to it and not part of the frame.

The gun is equipped with a Bob Marvel Everlast Recoil System that has been modified to fit the T4 and is designed to reduce felt recoil. It has a flat, coiled recoil spring that should last at least 6,000 rounds, along with a full-length guide rod that makes disassembly a bit different than with a standard guide rod. It's not difficult, just different.

TAKING FLIGHT

After a fairly long break-in period, the T4 fed flawlessly, with no malfunctions of any kind. The test gun was built to very tight tolerances, so lockup was solid. This makes the gun very accurate but also requires more rounds to complete the break-in procedure.

With its all-steel construction, slim grip and 9mm loads, the gun was very comfortable to shoot. All the controls worked just like they are expected to on a Nighthawk—that is, they worked flawlessly. It was easy to get back on target for fast follow-up shots, and in tactical drills the gun was a natural. And this is an accurate gun, too. From a pistol rest, I was able to get groups of less than 1 inch at 15 yards. However, the 15-yard test target that accompanied the gun showed a group of 0.4 inches. My eyes are too old and my hold is just not steady enough to wring the best from this gun.

For discreet self-defense carry, or for a gun that is just fun to shoot, this one should be on every buyer's short list. For more information, visit nighthawkcustom.com or call 877-268-4867. **1911**





NEW



ALIEN GEAR CLOAK TUCK 2.0

The Cloak Tuck 2.0 neoprene padded holster from Alien Gear Holsters features a lightweight design with a soft neoprene body-side layer that forms perfectly to your hip and provides more comfort than you've ever felt in a holster. The secret to its stability and sturdiness is the inner ABS polymer core. It readily flexes with your body but won't sag down with the weight of a handgun. Every Alien Gear Holster is handmade to order in the U.S.A. and goes through a rigorous quality assurance test. (aliengearholsters.com; 208-215-2046)



BLADE-TECH TOTAL ECLIPSE HOLSTER

The Blade-Tech Total Eclipse is built off the Eclipse design with two major differences. The contouring curve in the holster is now in the attachment itself. Attachments are available in straight drop and FBI cant. Also, they have included the Eclipse IWB conversion kit, which features their new Klipt attachment. The easy-on, easy-off Klipt attachment allows the user to quickly put their holster on without removing their belt. With a six-in-one carry system that accommodates for both inside/outside carry for both right and left hand users, it is truly one of the most versatile holsters available. (blade-tech.com; 877-331-5793)

COLONEL LOW VZ 2.0

Colonel Blades has redesigned its Low Vz for the ultimate in backup steel. The Low Vz 2.0 features a 154CM steel blade that is sure to hold its edge, a large finger ring and jimping on the spine. The grip has G10 panels for enhanced handling and control. The design is also stealthier and lower profile, making it easier to carry the knife discreetly. The Low Vz 2.0 comes with a sleek plastic-injection-molded sheath/clip for cover carry. (colonelblades.com)





CROSSBREED PURSE DEFENDER

Another member of the CrossBreed Modular family: The Purse Defender is designed to go inside your favorite purse or handbag. The Velcro-lined Kydex panel fits securely in your purse or other bag, and keeps the gun and purse stabilized. This means that it will not spill over or cause your purse to tip like many purse holsters on the market today. Combined with CrossBreed's handcrafted modular holster, the Purse Defender ensures your firearm is safe, secure and always in the same spot in your purse or bag. (crossbreedholsters.com; 888-732-5011)

DESANTIS DOUBLE MAG POUCH



This double magazine pouch, built to hold mags for a number of popular semi-auto pistols, features a snap-to-the-belt design. It's also designed so it may be carried horizontally or vertically, depending upon a shooter's preferences. Made of unlined leather, the DeSantis Double Mag Pouch is available in black or tan. It accommodates belts up to 1.75 inches wide and features a fully adjustable dual tension device that ensures a snug fit that won't move around on your belt. (desantisholster.com; 800-424-1236)

PRESENT ARMS ARMORER'S PLATE

The 1911 Armorer's Plate from Present Arms is a great aid to help you take care of your 1911. Made of synthetic polymer and featuring a single-stack pistol post as well as a variety of differently sized and machine-cut trays and pockets designed to accommodate the various pieces of your pistol, the Armorer's Plate allows users to carefully break down each piece easily, securely and without fear of scratching. The plate comes with a small swivel for full 360-degree rotation, providing full articulation of the firearm on the plate. (presentarmsinc.com; 413-575-4656)



PRODUCTS



HOGUE LASER ENHANCED GRIP

Want immediate gains in your confidence when handling your 1911? Follow the red dot! Hogue's new Laser Enhanced (LE) Grip for your classic 1911 will dramatically improve your accuracy and speed in any defensive or competitive scenario. Designed, engineered and handmade in America, the new LE Grip will make it easier for you to get on target quickly. Available in pink, Flat Dark Earth, OD green and black, the LE Grips are made of rubber with molded finger grooves and Hogue's control-enhancing texturing. (hogueinc.com; 800-438-4747)

MEC-GAR 9MM MAG



MEC-GAR is now offering a 10-round 9mm 1911 magazine that is a new, improved design with a higher capacity over standard nine-round magazines. It also features MEC-GAR's Anti-Friction Coating for better handling. With this new design, MEC-GAR moved the reducer from the rear of the magazine to the front, resulting in extra feed-lip length to improve feeding. Finally, the magazine features a removable baseplate made of high-impact plastic, versus the traditional welded baseplate of most magazines. (mec-gar.com; 860-635-1525)



STREAMLIGHT PROTAC LIGHT

Streamlight has introduced ProTac 1AAA flashlight, which uses one easily sourced AAA alkaline battery and delivers up to 70 lumens. Compact and versatile, the ProTac 1AAA also offers high- and low-intensity modes, a strobe feature and the latest in C4 LED technology. Its Ten-Tap programmable switch allows users to select one of three programs: high/strobe/low (the factory default), high only or low/high. The light delivers 30 minutes of continuous run time on high over a beam distance of 47 meters, 11 hours on low, and 1.2 hours in strobe mode, using an alkaline battery. (streamlight.com; 800-523-7488)

QUICK FIRE CASE

The new QF920R case from Quick Fire Cases makes it easy to tote four pistols and all of your necessary equipment to the range. With a lifetime guarantee, the QF920R features a protective foam insert with cutouts for the four pistols, ammo boxes, eye protection, .22 conversions, six magazines, gun cleaner and hearing protection. The case fits in most major airline overhead compartments and has two durable, easy-riding wheels, an automatic pressure-purge system and molded-in padlock holes. The case is airtight, watertight and dustproof. (quickfirecases.com; 800-819-4245)



VZ AZTEC GRIPS

If you want to personalize your 1911-style pistol or give it a bit of flair, the easiest option is to install new grip panels, and VZ Grips has you covered in this department. The company's new Aztec 1911 grip panels are cut to look like ancient Mayan ruins, with a very nice aggressive texture to lock your pistol in your hands. Made of G10, these grip panels are attractive and highly functional. Several color options are available, including black cherry, black desert sand, black, black/gray, dirty olive, hyena brown, MARSOC, "Plus P" pink, zebra and more. (vzgrips.com; 850-422-1911)



NATE SQUARED (N82) TACTICAL PROFESSIONAL IWB

This patented IWB holster design has a suede leather backing and a neoprene core. Nate Squared pioneered the use of neoprene in the holster industry which is one of the reasons that it is the most comfortable holster on the market. The Professional Series holster features the Twist Release Positive Retention System. A 100% of the retention is on the front of the triggerguard and with a very slight twist during the draw stroke, the handgun is easily drawn. (n82tactical.com; 336-237-1169)



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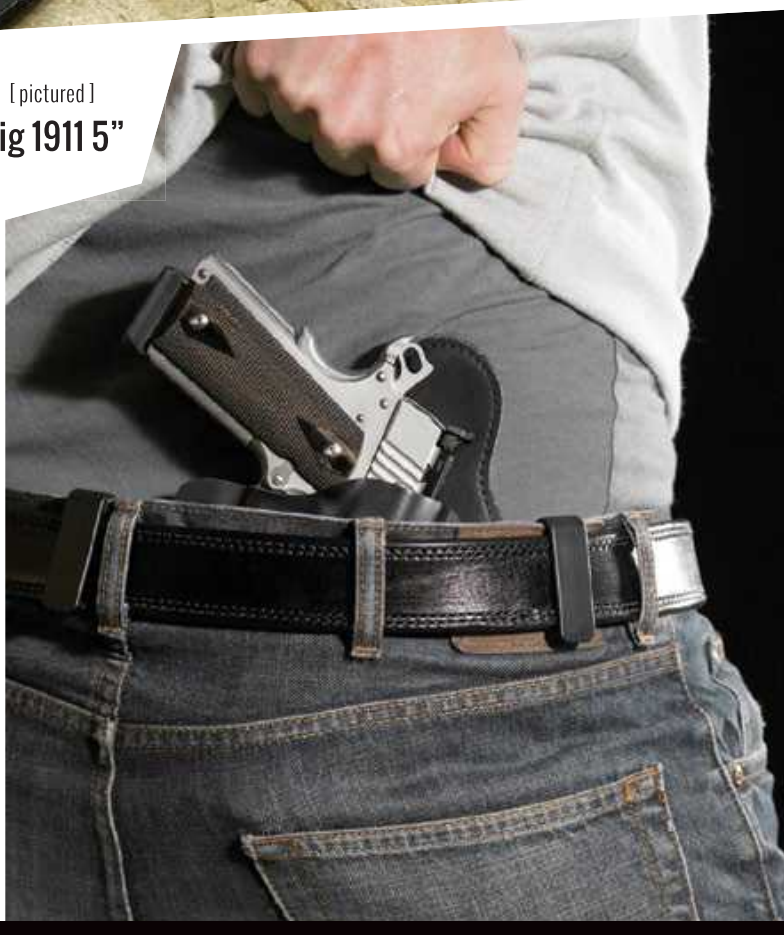
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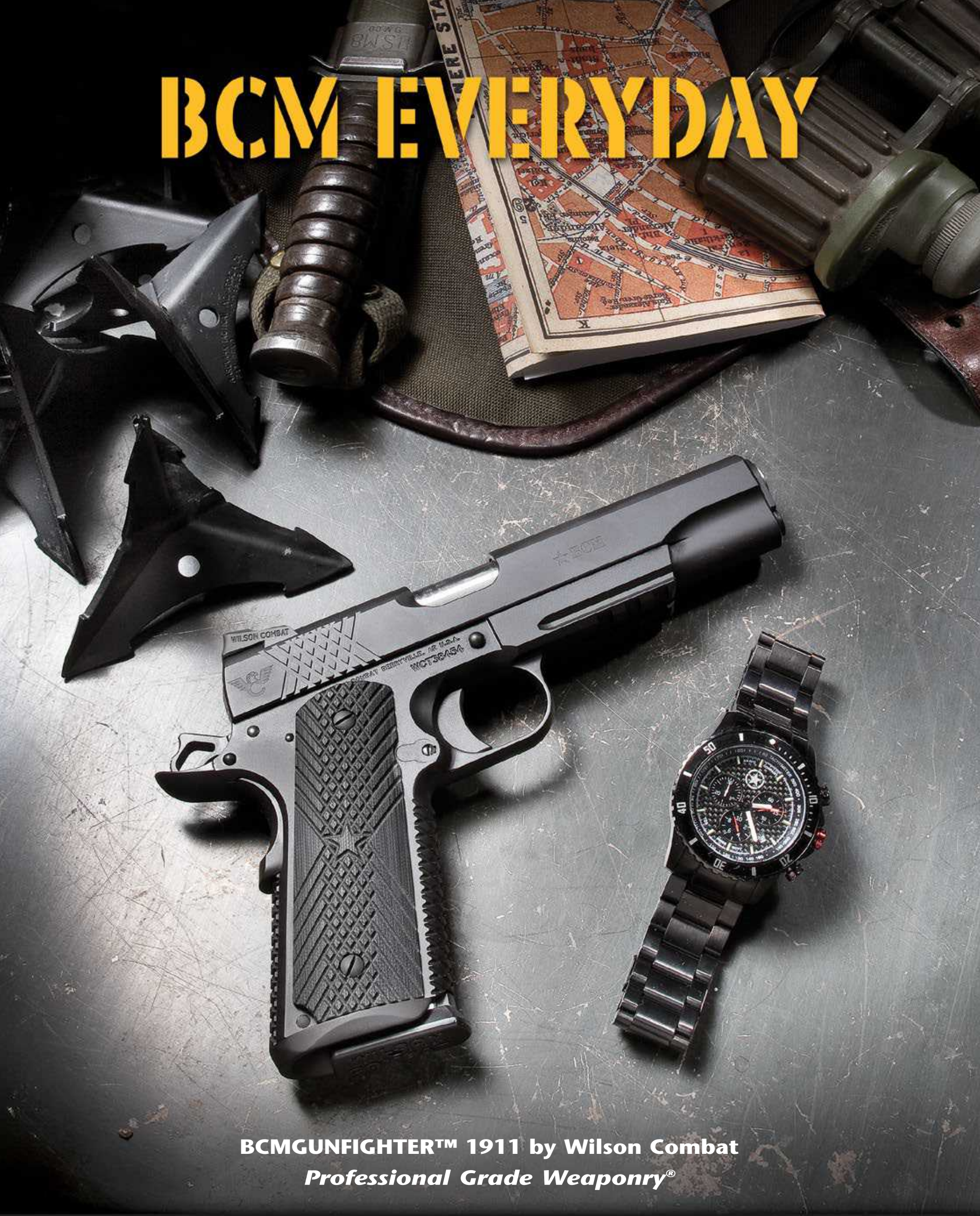
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